



# The Local

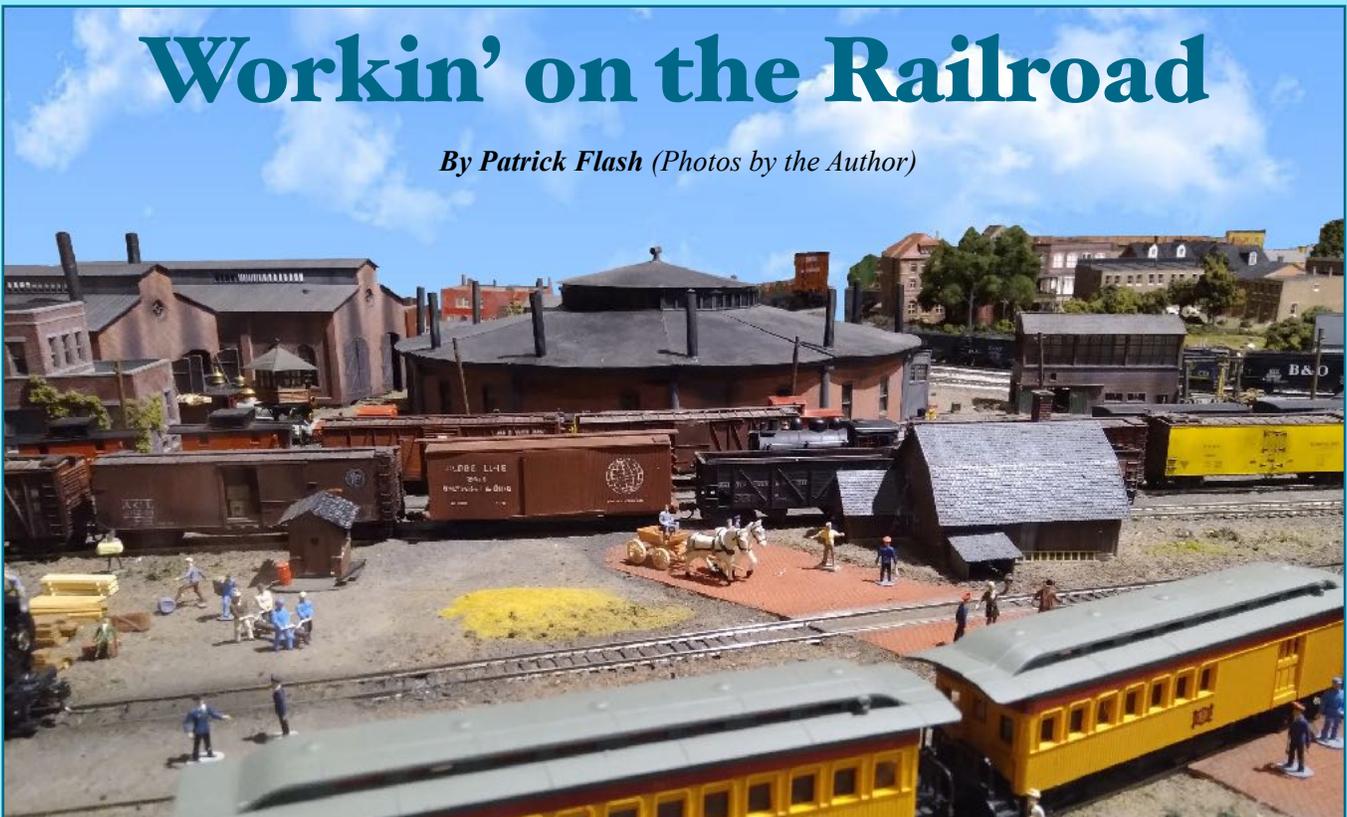
Official publication of the Mid-Eastern Region,  
NMRA – A tax-exempt organization

SEARCH

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## Workin' on the Railroad

*By Patrick Flash (Photos by the Author)*



*Photo 1: The shop area with a scratchbuilt roundhouse at the B&O Station Museum in Elliot City, MD.*

If you ever get to Ellicott City, MD, be sure to pay a visit to the B&O Station Museum at the foot of Maryland Avenue. Although not as well-known, nor as large as the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore, the B&O Station in Ellicott City MD is the oldest railroad terminus in the US. Built in 1831 as a freight only depot, it was reconfigured in 1857 to also accommodate passenger service. Today it is a museum depicting the railroad's history and it contains many artifacts related to that history. A recently renovated B&O caboose and our 40'+ long HO model railroad in the freight house are (in my opinion) two of the top attractions at the museum. The layout depicts the B&O as it was in the late 1880s to early 1890s. You can click on the link to visit the museum's site (<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/ecborail>). I'd like to focus on the model railroad in this short article.

*[Continued on Page 11]*

**President's Column...**



**The Lineup**

**By R. Scott Unger**

When I was in middle school, we occasionally played dodgeball in gym class, or was that junior high school? Either way, the faculty seemed to rely on it as an indoor option when the weather was not cooperative for outdoor recreational activities. Without having done any research to confirm it, I have a suspicion that in 2024 dodge ball may not be a sanctioned activity in many schools. On a related but separate note, I have been significantly nearsighted since at least 5th grade. Nearsightedness has its benefits to model railroading. Simply by removing my glasses even some of the finest details are easily visible to me. To take advantage of this does require holding the subject piece very close to my face. While effective, the downside is that I look completely ridiculous, but this is probably not much of a concern in the context of my basement workbench. Being nearsighted and wearing glasses, on the other hand, is not highly conducive to playing dodgeball. To avoid potentially damaging your glasses meant playing without them.

*(Continued on p. 3)*

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**HELP WANTED:**

Positions are now open and available for:  
**Executive Convention Chairman (ECC), and  
 Business Manager for the MER.**

Here's your chance to really make a difference. Join a great group of special people who help to provide wonderful leadership for the MER. We need your skills, wisdom and new ideas to make the MER even better. Job descriptions can be found [here](#) for Business Manager, p. 10, and ECC, p.17. Send email to [local-editor@mer-nmra.com](mailto:local-editor@mer-nmra.com).

It is hard to tell which was worse, trying to catch or avoid a fast-moving blurry red ball, or not knowing which one of your classmates threw it at you.

I think that I was a B student in gym class but performed much better in industrial arts-related classes. Likely more common than dodgeball, industrial arts classes are also probably underrepresented in contemporary school curricula. Being nearsighted in shop class was not typically a hindrance while performing tasks such as learning to solder, woodworking, screen printing or mastering basic electrical skills. Shop class helped me form the basis of many skills that I now use frequently as a model railroader. The other benefit to shop class was the absence of “the lineup” associated with forming teams. Unlike dodgeball, shop class rarely involved teams as most of the work was done either solo or with a single partner. The process of selecting dodgeball teams began with two of the more athletic students (essentially the team captains) being charged with selecting their team one at a time from the line of available participants. Those most skilled at dodgeball were selected first by the captains with those less skilled being picked last. I was usually picked somewhere in the middle.

In gym class, there were no volunteers as everyone was required to play regardless of their skill level, or eyesight. Dodgeball team selection might have been a different experience if each team was made up of volunteers, or if I had switched to wearing contact lenses. Unlike the dodgeball lineup, the Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA does rely on a volunteer process rather than choosing from a lineup of mandatory participants. We are very fortunate that the Region and Divisions are already

full of hardworking volunteers. We have an excellent digital newsletter, high-quality Regional conventions and countless Division events each year. All of these are coordinated entirely by dedicated individuals who care deeply about our hobby and value the input and enjoyment of our membership. As more folks get involved, take a look at the excellent articles by John Arthur who has recently started writing for The Local!

I am fortunate to be surrounded by an excellent Board of thoughtful hard-working individuals, so we have some really good momentum at the Regional level to keep everything on track. But we do have some openings! The *Business Manager* and the *Executive Convention Chairman* are particularly important positions that need to be filled soon\*.

We understand that family and work commitments coupled with other activities create challenges and our health and physical abilities also change over time. I did switch to contact lenses before high school and my contacts are now bifocals. We all have challenges and volunteering does require a time commitment, but it helps to support the mission of the NMRA and provides a way to meet and interact with other members. I encourage each of you to reach out to your Division Superintendent or MER official to see how you might volunteer some of your effort and talents. We promise not to throw any big red balls at your head!

\*Please contact the [Editor](#) if you are interested in volunteering for either of these positions.



## Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2024 Convention Piedmont Junction · October 17 - 20, 2024



<https://piedmontjunction.cpd13.org/>

Please enter (print legibly) all names **as you wish them to appear on your registration badge(s)**. Badges will not be changed at the convention.

Primary Registrant: \_\_\_\_\_ MMR? **Y / N**, Title for Badge \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Other Attending (living at same address): \_\_\_\_\_

Children Attending (18 & under - list all + age): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

<small>Registrar Use Only!</small>	Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____
	NMRA Member #: _____ Region: _____ Division: _____
	Favorite Scale: _____ Is this your first MER Convention? _____

Description	ID	Cost	Qty	Amount
<b>Registration</b>				
NMRA Member: ___ \$60 thru Aug 31, ___ \$70 Sep 1 – Oct 4, ___ \$80 On-Site Oct 17 – 20				
Non-Member: ___ \$80 thru Aug 31, ___ \$90 Sep 1 – Oct 5, ___ \$100 On-Site Oct 17 – 20				
One-Day (circle day)   NMRA Member: \$45 Fri Sat   Non-Member: \$65 Fri Sat				
Spouse/Significant Other		\$10		
Children 18 and Under (Name & Age)		\$0		
Banquet – Saturday Night ___ North Carolina Barbeque Buffet ___ Vegetarian ___ Gluten-Free	401	\$65		
Hot Breakfast Buffet Fri Sat Sun <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten-Free	402-4	\$21		
Lunch Buffet Fri Sat <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten-Free	405-6	\$26		
Editors' Breakfast ___ Fri (Division Editors)	420	\$0		
Superintendents' Breakfast ___ Sat (Division Superintendents)	421	\$0		
<b>Call Boards / Ops – See Convention Web Site for Latest Information</b>				
Golden East Model Railroaders Club -Section 1 (Thu)	801	\$5		
Golden East Model Railroaders Club -Section 2 (Sun)	802	\$5		
Charles Rausch's Rio Grande Southern NC -Section 1 (Thu)	803	\$5		
Charles Rausch's Rio Grande Southern NC -Section 2 (Sat)	804	\$5		
Dave Koss's Atlantic Coast Line (Thu)	805	\$5		
Rick Hollings's Aberdeen & Rockfish (Fri)	806	\$5		
Erik Dyke's ATSF, SP, GN (Thu)	807	\$5		
Jim Kalenowski's Lehigh Valley CNJ -Section 1 (Thu)	808	\$5		
Jim Kalenowski's Lehigh Valley CNJ -Section 2 (Fri)	809	\$5		
Ken Reising's Southern Pacific (Fri)	810	\$5		
Dan Koenigshofer's Western Pacific (Sat)	811	\$5		
Jamie Jordan's Lehigh Valley (Sat)	812	\$5		
Mike Rossi's Baltimore & Ohio (Thu)	813	\$5		
<b>Extra Fare Clinics – Registration Required, Further Information on Web Site</b>				
Speed Ballasting	601	\$5		
Build a Prototype Structure (NHVR Speeder & Oil Shed)	602			
___ N (\$15) ___ HO (\$15) ___ O (\$25) Detail Parts _____ (\$5)				
Making Trees from Wire	603	\$5		
Programming with JMRI	604	\$5		
Creating Zero-Depth Water Features	605	\$35		
Resin Castings for Unique Parts	606	\$15		
<b>Prototype Tours – Further Information on Web Site</b>				
Tichy Train Group Facility Tour (Fri 2 - 4pm)	201	\$5		
Tichy Train Group Facility Tour (Sat 10am - 12pm)	202	\$5		
Operate an NHVR Locomotive (30 minutes)	203	\$160		
Operate an NHVR Locomotive (60 minutes)	204	\$320		
Aberdeen & Rockfish Facilities Tour, Museum, and Layout	206	\$75		
Lunch Sandwich Selection: ___ Ham & Cheese ___ Turkey & Cheese ___ Club w/ Cheese				
<b>Convention Shirt</b>				
Regular: Small Medium Large XL	901-904	\$31		
2XL 3XL	905-906	\$35		
Tall: Small Medium Large XL	907-910	\$33		
2XL 3XL	911-912	\$39		
<b>Convention Car</b> N Scale Norfolk Southern 70-Ton 3-Bay Offset Hopper from Bluford Shops	921	\$25		
<b>TOTAL</b>			➡	
<b>Would you like to be a contest judge at the convention -- Circle YES or NO</b>				
<b>Have you been a contest judge in the past -- Circle YES or NO</b>				

Print registrations must be accompanied by check payable to **MER Conventions**. Send to: MER Conventions, PO Box 426, Sykesville, MD 21784-0426  
 Any questions and/or additional information, contact the Convention Registrar: e-mail [mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com](mailto:mer-registrar@mer-nmra.com) or call (410) 442-0446.  
**Hotel – Marriott at Research Triangle Park, 4700 Guardian Drive, Durham, NC 27703, (919) 941-6200. Room Rate - \$79.00 per night + tax.** To receive the convention room rate, contact the hotel directly and reference the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association.

*From the Editor's Desk...*

## Graduation

By Greg Warth

As I watched my grandson's graduation from Jackson County High School in Hoschton, Georgia recently, I marveled at his many accomplishments at such a young age. I was impressed by the speeches made by the President of the student body, by the valedictorian and others. Afterwards, I met with many of my grandson's friends and their family members at their graduation party. I was struck by his friends' intelligence, their respectfulness, their concern for others, and their confidence in moving forward into a challenging world. A great sense of accomplishment and camaraderie was evident among the students as well as the parents. I came away from that experience with renewed faith in America and in our educational system.

Shortly after that, I sat down to write this column with those thoughts in mind. Now I know why I like model railroading so much; it fosters and perpetuates those same kinds of qualities noted above in people.

One of the things that doctors look for in their patients is a "sense of well-being." That comes partly from being physically healthy, but physical health is not enough. Mental health is just as important.

The COVID pandemic left most people with feelings of isolation, loss, and a lack of belonging. We couldn't even talk to each other except through a mask. We avoided meetings and crowds of any kind. Many children couldn't go to school. Families couldn't go to church. Many hobbies lost a lot of members, some by loss of life, some by just needing to stay away from others who might be ill. Ours was no different.

The political climate has not helped the situation. Many families and friends have broken up because of the political divisiveness in our society which has led to even greater degrees of loneliness.

This does not appear to be going away any time soon. We are learning how to cope with the situation a little better by not talking about it. This interferes with our freedom of expression and our desire to see what others are thinking about the subject. Our expressive rigidity is harmful to our relationships, increases our loneliness and isolationism. It worsens our emotional climate and our mental health overall.

The treatment is to restore those relationships, to come together again and talk about what we have in common, not what tears us apart if we can't do it dispassionately. A lot of the younger generation is doing this. The MER as an organization must do everything it can to improve relationships, help each other out, become patient mentors, teach each other the value of teamwork, proper leadership, welcome new members, and always treat each other with respect. President Gordy Robinson's address to us at the last convention left us with four key words to follow "Be kind to others." This should be our mantra and our goal above all others. Do not let petty grievances interfere with your relationships with others. There are some who will not accept olive branches without continuing to air those grievances. But that is on them. The MER should always be above that.

This issue of *The Local* will show you how to create a fantastic boxcar in a nice article by John Arthur. Pat Flash shows how he was kind enough to volunteer his time to work on the scenery at the B&O Station layout in Ellicott City, Maryland. An updated Convention article and a new Registration form is in this issue. We have 'exciting' Division Reports from VP Gary Brown, and a remembrance of Bill Birchall who passed away recently leaving another void in the New Jersey Division. In addition, there will be an article written in tribute to the late Jack Parker. Overall, there is lots of kindness in this issue. Please pass it on.

Once again, I would like to thank our outstanding editorial staff for all their hard work, not only for this issue but for all they have done over the last several years:

Jack Dziadul

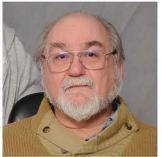
Alex Belida, MMR

Martin Brechbiel, MMR

And special thanks to all our authors. Without them, we would have nothing to show you.

Happy railroading,

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# IPSWICH HOBBIES



Craftsman Structure Kits

Jack Dziadul



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### UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

2024 – Carolina Piedmont Division—“Piedmont Junction” October 17-20, 2024, Durham, NC  
 2025 – Philadelphia Division – Crown Plaza Hotel, King of Prussia, PA, Dates TBD

### MER Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors Meeting - 7 pm Oct. 17, 2024 - Marriot Hotel - Research Triangle Park, Durham NC  
 Annual Business Meeting - 10 am Oct. 20, 2024 - Marriot Hotel - Research Triangle Park, Durham NC

# MER Elections 2024

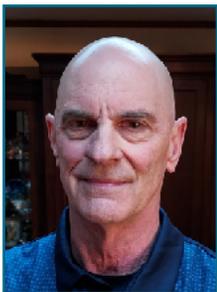
## Candidates Statements

### **R. Scott Unger for President, second term**



I am really struggling to understand how two years have gone by so quickly! Over that time both the MER and I have benefited from the hard-working volunteers that surround us in the Region and its many Divisions. These contributors host numerous virtual and in-person Division events, produce excellent publications and have organized a pair of Regional Conventions each with growing attendance. The many willing hands around us make all these things possible and it has been my privilege to work with everyone who dedicates their energy and talent to our hobby. Should it be the desire of the membership for me to serve the MER for a second term, it would be my pleasure to continue to support and encourage the outstanding work within the Region as President.

### **Gary Brown for Vice President, second term**



My first term as Vice President of the MER has been both challenging and rewarding. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the Superintendents of each Division, and having the opportunity to meet more members of the Region. A particular challenge was taking on the responsibility of acting Executive Convention Chairman in addition to my Vice President duties. I have learned a lot while working with the planning committees for each annual convention. All MER members are now assigned to a division, however participation of members in division activities seems to still be an issue. I will work to help find ways to increase the participation of members in both division and MER activities if I am elected to serve another term as MER Vice President.

### **Rick Stoneking for Secretary, second term**



Currently serving as the Secretary of the MER since July 2022, and served as MER Publisher from March 0f 2022 to November 2023, and NJ Division Director from May 2021 to September 2022. I also currently serve as a Board member and Treasurer for the Maryland & Pennsylvania RR Historical Society, and Secretary of the Burlington County Model Railroad Club. Professionally I have a degree in Electrical Engineering and work as an Engineering Manager for a Robotic automation company in Moorestown, NJ. Served in the US Army as a Military Police Officer from 1984 to 1987 active duty, and 1987 to 1990 in the Reserves.

### William Wurtzell for Treasurer



#### MER qualifications:

· Currently serving as Acting Treasurer since taking over for Brian Kampschroer in October 2023. In this time, I have become conversant with the responsibilities of the Treasurer and have successfully executed these responsibilities.

- Currently serving as Assistant Treasurer-Conventions, appointed to this position in October 2020. I have worked on the budgets, paying convention bills and determining convention profit and loss for the 2021, 2020, and 2023 conventions and the budget for the 2024 convention.
- Served as James River Division Clerk from 2020 to 2023.

#### Professional career:

- Currently retired.
- I am a New York State Certified Public Accountant. Currently registered with New York as inactive.
- From 1971 to 1977, employed by Peat Marwick Mitchell as an auditor in New York City.
- From 1977 to 2002, employed by two investment banks and a commodities broker as a top-level financial executive, primarily responsible for all financial recordkeeping functions, financial reporting, and regulatory reporting to the Securities and Exchange Commission or the Commodities Futures Trading Commission.
- From 1992 to 2015, worked as one of two partners owning and managing residential apartments, including all record keeping functions, paying employees, approving tenants, handling evictions and filing tax returns.
- From 2002 to 2022, developed a small accounting practice, primarily providing bookkeeping and tax services to small businesses and individuals.

#### Summary:

I am a highly qualified accountant, experienced in the skills needed to be the MER Treasurer, and look forward to working in this position in the future.





# NMRA Achievement Program Update

By Kurt Thompson, MMR  
MER AP Manager

Kurt Thompson, MMR

Since the last issue of *The Local*, the following members have earned the listed awards - both AP certificates and Golden Spike Awards. When you see them next, please congratulate them and if you're curious, ask them how they achieved these awards.

### Division 3 - Philly

Michael Junod      Model Railroad Engineer - Civil, 06/24/24

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### Division 4 - Tidewater

Bill Fay              Master Builder - Scenery, 06/11/24

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### Division 10 - South Mountain

John Pursell        Master Builder - Cars, 04/11/24

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### Division 11 - Susquehanna

Scott Unger         Association Official, 04/10/24

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*Lumbermill, Chesapeake Bay & Western RR in Grafton, VA.  
(Photo by the Editor).*



*Kurt Thompson's switching layout (Photo by the Editor).*

*[Workin' on the Railroad - Continued from Page 1]*

The remnants of hurricane Agnes in June of 1972 caused the Patapsco river to rise well above its normal banks. The flood waters were above knee level in the freight house and rose to near the second floor of the station building. The C&O was set to tear down the station area and/or sell it off. Historical Ellicott City, Inc. was founded to save the station and stepped in to both save and renovate the station and the adjacent freight house. They arranged with the Mt. Clare division of the NMRA to build an HO layout depicting the B&O in the freight house building. The division is long gone but, as you can guess, an almost 50 year old model railroad needs lots of upkeep.

The layout is basically a 42' x 10' display layout (two loops) with no operating turnouts except in the staging area. In staging the operators have a choice of four to six trains to run depending on whether they run westbound or eastbound. Only two trains run at any one time. The propulsion system is straight DC which is easy for the visitors to turn on via push buttons located at each end of the room. The running time varies with each push so you frequently see the "little ones" running back to the buttons as the trains stop.

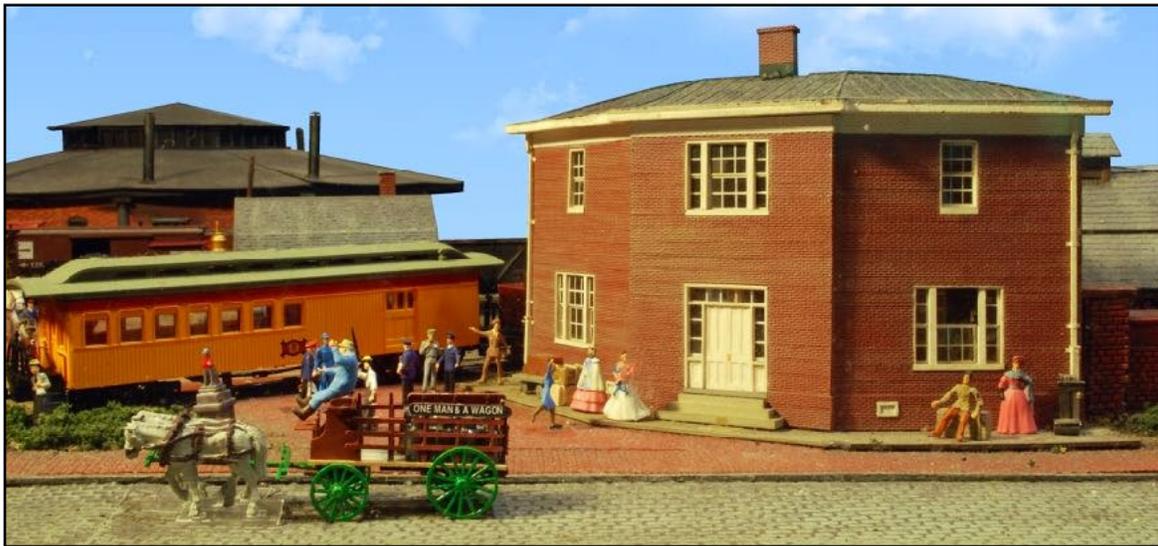
I've occasionally brought in an old Aristo Craft Train Engineer system controller and connected it to one of the loops. When I ask a youngster if they would like to run the train, their eyes light up and they eagerly grab for the throttle. I only relinquish the throttle after instructions on how to run the train at a realistic speed.

My next goal is to complete an Arduino project that will allow the kids to use a TV remote to blow the whistle, ring the bell, and call up the sounds associated with an elephant, a mermaid, and a dinosaur "hidden" on the layout. Supposedly, the elephant escaped from the Barnum and Bailey Circus. The mermaid slipped out of a Disney movie. The dinosaur belonged to a young man who used to come with his grandpa while he worked on the layout. We keep it in honor of the youngster. We also have a list of other more "railroad" things that visitors can look for.

I first started volunteering at the museum about 2018. Since we spend the winters in Florida, I'm only there from May to mid October. My first job was to try to clean the roofs of the buildings with damp Q tips. Imagine my surprise when, after gentle swabbing, a gray roof turned out to be red. I was even more surprised when I discovered that quite a few buildings were built with cardstock! I never would have guessed from a quick look. Many of the buildings in Ellicott City had to be scratch built as no kits of these structures would have been available. Thankfully, in 2019 the museum contracted with an outside group to replace all the "natural" greenery with modern ground foam. They also removed all the buildings and cleaned them and the layout surface, too.

Four of us volunteer on Wednesdays to help keep the layout running. Ben McNew has been there the longest. He primarily works on scenery and detailing. Jack Walsh and Andy Courtemanche appeared during my second summer volunteering. They were replacing countless burned out incandescent lights with LEDs. Talk about a dirty job crawling under a layout whose underbelly hadn't been cleaned in ages! Jack continues to be our loco expert and recently revived greater than 20 4-4-0 locos given up for dead years ago. Andy is always the first one in and gets to fix whatever broke/derailed/melted since the previous Wednesday. I generally work on scenery repair; building new kits; and on the layout inhabitants, replacing clunky plastic bases with thin acetate which is much less visible.

I've taken pictures of some areas of the layout to show the historical nature of the scenes. Since the refurbishment in 2019, the original backdrop has been removed and replaced with large photos corresponding to sites on the model. I've removed the background photos and replaced them with sky. The photos run from west Baltimore to Ellicott City.



*Photo 2: The Mt. Clare station building, built in 1851.*



*Photo 3: The Baltimore city area of the layout.*

*Photo 4: The Carroll mansion, winter home of Charles Carroll, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence.*



*Photo 5: The scratch built Relay House, where horses were changed for the last five mile run to Ellicott City.*



*Photo 6: The Thomas Viaduct over the Patapsco River. It was finished in 1835 and is still the longest stone arch viaduct with an arc in the world.*



*Photo 7: The Patterson Viaduct over the Patapsco River.*



*Photo 8: St. Paul's Church and the freight house in Ellicott City.*



*Photo 9: The Oliver Viaduct at the base of Ellicott City. Two of the arches were destroyed in a flood in 1868. They were replaced by a steel bridge.*



*Photo 10: The view down the Frederick Turnpike (Main Street) in Ellicott City as seen from the viaduct. The Patapsco Hotel to the right served as the passenger station until 1857.*



**October 17-20, 2024**

# Piedmont Junction

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and photos that are accepted are published in approximately the order in which they were received.

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1. Please read the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on "[Preparing Your Manuscript for Publication in The Local](#)."
2. Compose and submit your text in one of the following formats: TXT, DOC, or DOCX.
3. Consider what photos, illustrations, or other graphics can go with the text. These are essential. But DO NOT include/insert them into your text. DO put notations in the text such as "Insert Photo #1 here."
4. Your photos should be high resolution and very clear. We can-not accept photos that are fuzzy or out of focus. JPG, GIF, TIFF, and PNG formats are acceptable.
5. Please rename your photo files in the order you want them to appear, e.g., Photo-1.jpg, Photo-2.jpg, etc.
6. If you have captions for your photos, etc., create a separate text file for the captions, each of which should be numbered to match a numbered photo or figure.
7. Send your article or photos by email to [The Local Editor](#). There may be a limit on the number of megabytes you can send depending on your email program. If necessary, either send the photos three at a time, or compress the photos with a "Zip" program to send more at one time.

**Special Notes:** Please only send us your own creative work or that for which you have written permission to use so we can give that source proper credit. We need to avoid any copyright infringement situations.

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## Refurbishing an Old Boxcar

By John Arthur (Photos by the author)

We model railroaders like to dabble, trying new things and practicing old things, all in the pursuit of finding a better way to accomplish something. Maybe the hobby grabs us, because in addition to “liking trains,” there are just so many facets to it, and then skills to learn and improve upon which compel us to keep modeling. A recent project of mine checked a lot of these boxes.

A friend of mine was selling off some excess stock as he had honed in on a more specific time and place for his layout. A couple of his items intrigued me, including some older boxcars that all needed some work, including two that were of the same railroad and road number. The price was certainly right, at \$6 for the two Athearn blue box N&W boxcars, so I went ahead and made the deal. It so happens that he models the Cotton Belt, and I the Seaboard Airline, but in the same era. In the past, we have each purchased the same Cotton Belt car, weathered them, and then simulated interchange between our pikes which was something we both agreed we should do again. He has a SAL boxcar with a custom paint job, and I located the needed decals (SAL with a “Route of the Orange Blossom Special” billboard on the side) to make a version to match his, for more interchanges in the future.

It isn't as if I do not have enough projects lying around. Indeed, we all do, but this one called to me as it offered the chance to try something new as well as lean on some things I already had figured out. I chose one of the two duplicate N&W cars, the one with a glossier finish, and reporting marks that seemed a little blurry. I am in my 40s. There is a good chance this car was older than I am, and screen printing, etc. have come a long way over the past 4 decades. It also had plastic wheels, horn-hook couplers, and was grossly underweight, thus not unlikely to be a real operational nightmare on my layout. So, of course, I bought it!

Why? I had never stripped a car down to bare plastic, nor painted a car, though, I have been developing my airbrushing skills and techniques on other projects. I had also never really gotten a good handle on decals, and I have some much nicer kits I'd like to build as my skills improve. I am familiar with NMRA height and weight standards on cars for my layout and with replacing couplers with Kadees. I am also comfortable with replacing all those older plastic wheels with their dirt, grime, and deep flanges that cause derailments, with Kadee, Proto 2k, or InterMountain metal wheels. I have also used a few weathering techniques, but a less expensive car is a great place for practice. Something old, something new, something blue... no, that is a different checklist. A chance to work on some new skills? Check. A chance to use and practice some abilities I already have? Check.

Best case, I get a nice new car to add my fleet and I get the opportunity to develop and practice some foundational modeling skills. Worst case, I'm out three bucks and some time, but still gain some knowledge of learning what not to do (**Photo 1**).



*Photo 1: “Before” picture of cars, I chose the car on the right for this project with its glossier finish and markings that looked less crisp.*

Stripping the existing paint off the car proved to be quite easy. I did some research online and asked a few modelers, and all pointed to a soak in isopropyl alcohol (IPA); most indicated a strength of greater than 90% would be best. Some sources called for longer soaks of 24-48 hr, but I found that six hr and moderate pressure from a soft bristled toothbrush was all it needed; the paint lifted off easily. Running the liquid through a coffee strainer to remove any chunks of paint first, I saved the remaining IPA for use on a future product (**Photo 2**).

*Photo 2: After submerging the box car shell in 99% isopropyl alcohol for about 6 hours, I removed the paint fairly easily with moderate pressure and a soft bristled toothbrush.*



Airbrushing proved easy as well...the second time. On the first take, I used Tamiya [XF-66] Light Grey as a primer, thinned heavily with (clean) IPA before switching to Tamiya [XF-68] NATO Brown (also thinned heavily with IPA) for the main coat. For testing purposes, I brushed a series of red browns and browns onto a scrap piece of plastic and compared them to a picture of the example car that my Cotton Belt modeling friend had sent me before settling on that particular color. Further reading online showed that different shops, and the same shops at different times, often mixed and blended their own “boxcar red” on the fly. In addition, sunlight over the years bleaches and fades paint differently as well, so there really is no right answer. I picked one that “looked about right.”

The airbrushing mistake showed itself after the final coat. I knew that prior to decaling, I needed a nice, smooth finish to the model so the decal would sit nicely flush against the surface of the model with no air pockets. I was using matte paint, which should be fine with a gloss coat over top, but the finish was rough looking. Upon running my finger over the surface, I picked up paint pigments. Not good. I realized I had held the airbrush too far from the model, and that the paint was drying well before contacting it, thus the “powdery” finish. I had just learned how to strip paint, so I did that again and removed this coat of paint just as I had done with the original paint and started over.

For the second take I made two changes. Firstly, I switched to a rattle can of proper grey primer. Once that cured, I used the same Tamiya NATO Brown that I had before, and made sure to hold the airbrush a bit closer to the model, taking care to make an even coat in several thin passes. This resulted in a much better finish, and I was back on track. After a few more passes from a can of Testor’s Gloss Coat, and some curing time, I was ready to move on to applying decals ([Photo 3](#)).



*Photo 3: A fresh coat of paint*

Decaling is the final “new-ish” skill to dabble in on this project, and I spent time on both YouTube and perusing the pages of Model Railroader back issues for information. I had attempted water slide decals a few times before; most recently renumbering a couple of Accurail cars using the decals they send if one follows the instructions in the kit. These turned out okay once I hid all my mistakes with weathering, but I did have some benefit in learning not to touch the decals after applying Micro-Sol under my belt before starting this time. Knowing I’d “blown it” once before, it made sense to go back and study the process again and refamiliarize myself with the finer points of Micro Set and Micro Sol. This author would have named them the other way around, since Micro Set is the one you don’t have leave “set,” but Microscale Industries didn’t ask me and so we are stuck with the existing names. The basic process is one you all surely know, starting with the gloss coat over the model. Next, I trimmed each decal close to the lettering with a brand new No. 11 X-ACTO blade and allowed it to soak in warm water for around 30 seconds while applying Micro Set to the area. I then used tweezers to hold the backing and used a modeling paint brush to push the decal off the backing and onto the model. I used the brush and a fine tipped metal point to adjust the decal, then pressed down with the brush and a cotton swab to put the decal down in place and remove air bubbles, especially where it crossed a line of rivets. Once satisfied, I added Micro Sol to allow it to further conform to the contour of the plastic and left it alone. After allowing it to dry thoroughly, I applied Micro Sol to the areas with rivets, and along the edge of the decal multiple times, but I never touched the decal again. Once cured and dried, I gave the whole model another layer of gloss coat to seal the decals, hide their edges, and prep the model for the first step of weathering (**Photo 4**).



*Photo 4: New SAL markings, sealed in with gloss coat.*

Weathering is something I want to do more of when modeling. I like to operate, but I also like to create the illusion that I am actually operating a real train in a real place. In my opinion, next to shorts, derailments, etc., the quickest way to break that trance is a train of shiny plastic running through an otherwise realistic scene. Admittedly, I do not practice what I preach. I'd only weathered about 10% of my cars before relocating an operating layout to its current home. But I have the opportunity now to do some weathering before I put a car on the layout. Just as before, I'd ensure proper weight and height, metal wheels, and Kadees before putting a car onto the new track. Now, I can now add weathering to that list.

I did the weathering in three steps: a dot fade, a pin wash, and some lightly airbrushed dust and grime. The first two methods were borrowed/stolen from military modelers and used artist oil paints. The dot fade technique makes for a convincing sun-bleached look, leveraging some color theory I do not understand, but follow because I think it works. In addition to obvious colors like white, raw sienna, and burnt umber, two additional colors are used. One is similar to the base color of the model, and one that is complimentary to it. Without understanding the theory behind it, I can share that this just means something across the color wheel from the base color. The boxcar was painted a reddish-brown color; across the color wheel from red is blue. With some odorless mineral spirits on hand, I used a small point brush and painted oil-based polka dots all over my shiny, new, and freshly painted and decaled boxcar, using those five colors. Next, using a wide flat brush wet down with the mineral spirits, I dragged the brush in a downward motion through the dots, repeating until the dots just disappeared. This gives an intentionally non-uniform look to the fading. The white and blue and other colors mixed together as a light filter over the brown really does look like brown paint that's been in the sun for ten years. The technique takes advantage of the properties of oil paints for smoothing and blending, which are amplified by the smoothness of that gloss coat. Once this layer cured, about 24 hr later, I sprayed the entire model with another layer of gloss coat to seal in my work and set the stage for the next layer and it was on to the pin wash step ([Photos 5, 6](#)).

*Photo 5: A car full of polka dots. What am I thinking?*





*Photo 6: After the dot fade is blended, note the uneven, sun-bleached look.*

A pin wash is simpler than the dot fade, in that it only uses one color. Any dark or dirty looking color will work, and something similar to but darker than the original color is a good place to start. I also like using a color from Abteilung 502 called “Starship Filth.” It’s about what you would get if you mixed browns like raw umber with grimy black. It looks like grime and filth, perfect for any railroad car. Rather than wash the entire surface of the car in the paint, this technique focuses the wash (thin the chosen color to a wash with odorless mineral spirits) on panel lines, rivets, and details. The first step is to wet the area down with thinner (odorless mineral spirits) and then allow the gloss coat and capillary action to draw the oil-based wash from the paint brush into those lines as you touch the loaded brush onto them. Once the thinner dries, any tide marks are simply feathered away with a wide brush. With oil paints, we have 24-48 hr to easily work and rework colors. Once satisfied, I sealed this layer in with matte clear coat ([Photo 7](#)).



*Photo 7: During the pin wash, allow capillary action to carry the oil-based wash over the glossy finish into the crevices and details. After feathering the edges and removing tide marks, the details will really stand out and the car looks more realistic.*

Before completing the weathering, I went ahead and worked on the wheels and underbody. I installed a pair of Kadee No. 5 couplers and checked their height against an NMRA coupler height gauge. After adding a 0.015" washer to each and using a pair of pliers, I bent the uncoupling pin to clear the gauge (and any switch points later). Next, I got out my digital scale and added ½ oz to the interior of the boxcar to meet NMRA recommendations for car weight. I then removed the trucks from the underbody, and the wheels from the trucks. I ran a bamboo skewer into the screw holes of the trucks in preparation for painting, and with the old wheels thrown in the scrap box, I prepped the replacement metal wheels for painting. The car body was placed back on the base, truck-less. I like to use a blend of Tamiya XF-52 Flat Earth and XF-57 Buff for dirt and dust. I used a thinned mix of the two to spray the wheels, trucks, and the underbody of the car. I intentionally sprayed from the bottom of the car, but at a slight angle so that some overspray hits the bottoms of the car sides. I also sprayed a little onto the car ends, concentrating more where the wheels would get splashed in wet weather. I used a MicroMark Truck Tuner to remove any paint from the inside of the trucks where the axle points go, used a fine sanding block to remove paint from the axle tips, reassembled the trucks, and reinstalled them onto the car (**Photo 8**).



*Photo 8: The re-finished car in its native habitat.*

I am happy with the “new” old car and am glad to have taken the time to turn it into something useful as it will be “interchanged” with my friend’s layout soon. It’s also about the journey, learning some new things, and practicing some that we’ve already learned. I could have replaced the roof

walk, ladders, grab irons, etc., but those are skills I have not messed with yet. Maybe I will with the next build. As I said in the beginning, keep dabbling!

I produced a YouTube video that shows the process discussed in this article. Here's the link: [https://youtu.be/GILa\\_Iq5y-o](https://youtu.be/GILa_Iq5y-o) [Video length: 14:41 min.]



*Detailed scratchbuilding by Howard Zane. His Piedmont Division layout was featured in The Local Jan-Feb 2022 p. 34 (Photo by Jerry Lauchle).*



## National Train Show 2024

**Notice:** Due to unforeseen circumstances, the National Model Railroad Association announces that the National Train Show, originally scheduled to take place at the Long Beach Convention Center, August 9-11, 2024, has been relocated to the Westin Hotel. The Westin Hotel is the site of the [SurfLiner 2024 NMRA National Convention](#), and we believe this convenient and intimate venue will result in a more accommodating and enjoyable experience for all participants.

# Piedmont Junction 2024: Tours and Excursions

By Don Roback (Photos by the author unless otherwise noted)



For the most up-to-date information including registration and hotel information, see the convention website at [PiedmontJunction.org](https://PiedmontJunction.org). You can also find a link on the [NMRA.org](https://NMRA.org) conventions page.

Three fantastic prototype and vendor tours will be featured during the Piedmont Junction 2024 convention being held in the Triangle region of North Carolina from October 17-20, 2024. Available will be facility tours of a busy bridge-route carrier and a shortline railroad along with a tour of a local heritage railroad. There will also be two opportunities to tour the well-known Tichy Train Group design and production facilities.

The convention host hotel is the Marriott Raleigh Durham Research Triangle Park at 4700 Guardian Dr in Durham, NC ([Hotels in Durham, NC- Marriott Raleigh Durham RTP](#)). The room rate is only \$79(!) per night so don't delay making a reservation. This rate is only good until September 17.

Convention registration is now open and includes a section to reserve your spot for these tours. Access is limited so sign up as soon as possible. See the convention website <https://piedmontjunction.cpd13.org/home> for the registration form and more details on these prototype and vendor tours.

## New Hope Valley Railway

The New Hope Valley Railway (<http://www.triangletrain.com/>) will be open on Friday (Oct. 18) and Saturday (Oct. 19) of the convention. The railway operates over 6.5 miles of track laid in 1904 using two GE and two Whitcomb locomotives along with a collection of passenger and freight cars. In addition, there are several locomotives on site in various stages of restoration. There is also a large G scale garden railroad on site.

On Friday, activities will include the Operate-a-Locomotive program which consists of a 60 minute ride for two guest engineers and a 30 minute ride for four guest engineers. This event can be reserved and paid for on the convention registration.

On Saturday, activities will include a full tour of the facilities, a Halloween Train Ride in a car reserved exclusively for convention attendees. Attendees must order tickets for the 2:15 pm Halloween Train Ride at <http://www.triangletrain.com/> at a cost of \$18.45 with tax. Guided museum tours will also be included in these events and all other activities on site are free. The New Hope Valley Railway is located approximately 22 miles south of the convention hotel and there will be no bus transportation.



*Photo 1: Locomotive used for the Operate-A-Locomotive Program at the New Hope Valley Railway.*

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## **Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad**

The Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad (<https://www.aberdeen-rockfish.com/>) will host a tour of its facilities on Saturday, Oct 19<sup>th</sup>.

First up for this tour will be a visit to the nearby restored [Aberdeen Union Museum](#). This site houses many historical artifacts from the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad as well as other railroads. Included is a fully intact rail inspection car from the 1930s and outside the museum is a restored caboose converted from a boxcar that was used in mixed trains. The museum is also home to the [Sandhills Central Model Railroad Club](#) layout.

Next will be a visit to the [Aberdeen and Rockfish headquarters](#) building (**Photo 2**) which has been used continuously since 1904. The building houses many pieces of railroad artwork in addition to the administrative offices. Aberdeen and Rockfish president Carl Hollowell will be our banquet speaker on Saturday night, and he will be discussing topics related to his life in prototype railroading and stories of his time with this railroad. The last tour stop will be the diesel servicing shops featuring a locomotive with its hood doors open so that attendees can climb aboard and inspect the engine and other internal equipment.

For this tour, a bus for attendees will leave the host hotel for the approximately 75 minute ride to the site. After the tours, a box lunch from Railhouse Brewery will be picked up for the ride back to the hotel.



*Photo 2: Picture of Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad Headquarters in the early days (Photo courtesy of the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad).*

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## **Tichy Train Group Factory Tour**

There will be two tours available for the [Tichy Train Group Factory](#). The site is located approximately 41 miles west of the hotel. There will be one tour on Friday, Oct. 18, and one on Saturday, Oct. 19. These will be self-drive events. The tours will be hosted by Don Tichy who loves to share the process of design and production of his kits and parts. Tichy Train Group is well known in the industry for their car kits, structure kits, detail parts, and scenery and trackside details. He usually has at least one of his machines in operation to show the injection or extrusion processes in action. Don typically offers discounts on his products in the attached store (**Photo 3**).

*Photo 3: Don Tichy in his production facility.*



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## Carolina Model Railroad Club

After the Saturday tour, stop by the Carolina Model Railroad Club (<http://www.carolinamodelrr.org/>) open house nearby in Greensboro, NC. This club was founded in 1973 to promote model railroading in the area. They are currently working on both an N scale and HO scale layout reflecting the local area and landmarks. This club is located approximately 22 miles west of the Tichy Train Group factory and approximately 62 miles west of the host hotel. Addresses will be provided in the program book at registration. Folks wanting to visit “on-the-way” layouts will be instructed closer to the convention on how to get to the Thursday layout addresses.



*Photo 4: Heavy mainline railroading on the Carolina Model Railroad Club's HO layout (Photo courtesy of Robert Bridges).*

# How to Create a Presentation

By Greg Cassidy

Let's say you want to share something with fellow model railroaders. It could be an area of knowledge that you're familiar with such as a particular railroad or locomotive type. It could be a modeling technique that you've developed or become familiar with recently. It could be something just as simple as the structure that you built, or your layout, or modules that you set up at a show. Any and all of these can be presented to fellow modelers in different ways and on various platforms. It could be a live clinic that you're presenting to either your club or your NMRA division. Or the presentation you're showing might be on one of the many online platforms available. Zoom seems to be the most common.

For clarity, a clinic can be described as where you're teaching a technique, whereas a presentation can just be generally sharing information about a topic. This could either be for a club or one of the many online model railroading shows that are around. There are a variety of outlets such as New Tracks Modeling, NMRAX, and many NMRA Divisions that routinely have online clinics. I have also done live as well as online presentations for my model railroad club and my NMRA division. This was part of my working towards my NMRA Achievement Program certificates for Model Railroad Author and Association Volunteer. If you're interested in obtaining either of these AP Certificates, then learning how to do presentations can be a very important tool in your toolbox. So how do you go about

First you must decide how you want to present your information. If it's a live event, you can either do it with props or you can do a slide show presentation using a computer, projector, and screen. In **Photo 1** you can see the author giving a live presentation to a group using the laptop on the table and a ceiling-mounted projector. By props I mean something tangible, such as a resin casting, a tool, or a part that you made or modified. This method can also be used for online presentations. However, using live props doesn't come across as well on a computer screen, because they may be hard to show, and you can't pass them around like you could in a live clinic.



*Photo 1: The author giving a live PowerPoint presentation.\**

\*Photo 1 by Alex Belida, MMR. All others are screenshots by the author.

If you are going to be sharing your presentation on a screen, whether it is a live clinic or an online program, there are a couple of ways to go about doing this. You can just show pictures as you talk over them. This is a very simple method and all you need to do is get your photos in the order that you want to show them. You'll want to make sure that your photographs are sharp and clear, and that they show what technique or object it is you're discussing. You don't have to be a great photographer. But when taking a picture of a model or a casting or something small, be aware of the lighting and any background that may interfere with your subject matter. It's very easy to find a white poster board to use as a backdrop behind whatever you're taking the picture of, so it stands out.

If your clinic is showing something larger such as a model railroad layout or possibly even a prototypical item such as a locomotive or a passenger car, you will still want to have photographs that clearly show your subject. Showing a photo of a particular style of brake apparatus in a photograph where it's hidden in the shadows and difficult to see doesn't help your viewers no matter how well you describe it. Also, be aware that if you are showing a video of something like a layout, it's easy for your audience to get queasy from a roller coaster effect if your video camera (usually a phone these days) is quickly flying over it in different directions. It's often much easier for video to work on a larger scale in an outdoor environment such as showing a locomotive. If you are taking video in an indoor environment, try to make your motions slow and steady.

There are other methods to generate a presentation besides just showing photographs or video. The most common that you're most likely aware of is using PowerPoint. This Microsoft product seems to be ubiquitous in almost every online clinic or presentation that I've attended. I'm going to show you a little bit about how you can put together a presentation in PowerPoint, but this will by no means be an article on how to use PowerPoint. You could spend days online just going through tutorials, both written and recorded, if you want to learn all the intricacies of the program. But I will briefly show you how I tend to do mine, and if you've ever seen any PowerPoint presentations, you'll know how different they can be. It can open a whole new way of expressing yourself. I must admit that coming from a printing and graphic design background I often spend a lot more time creating my presentations than I really should just because I enjoy it.

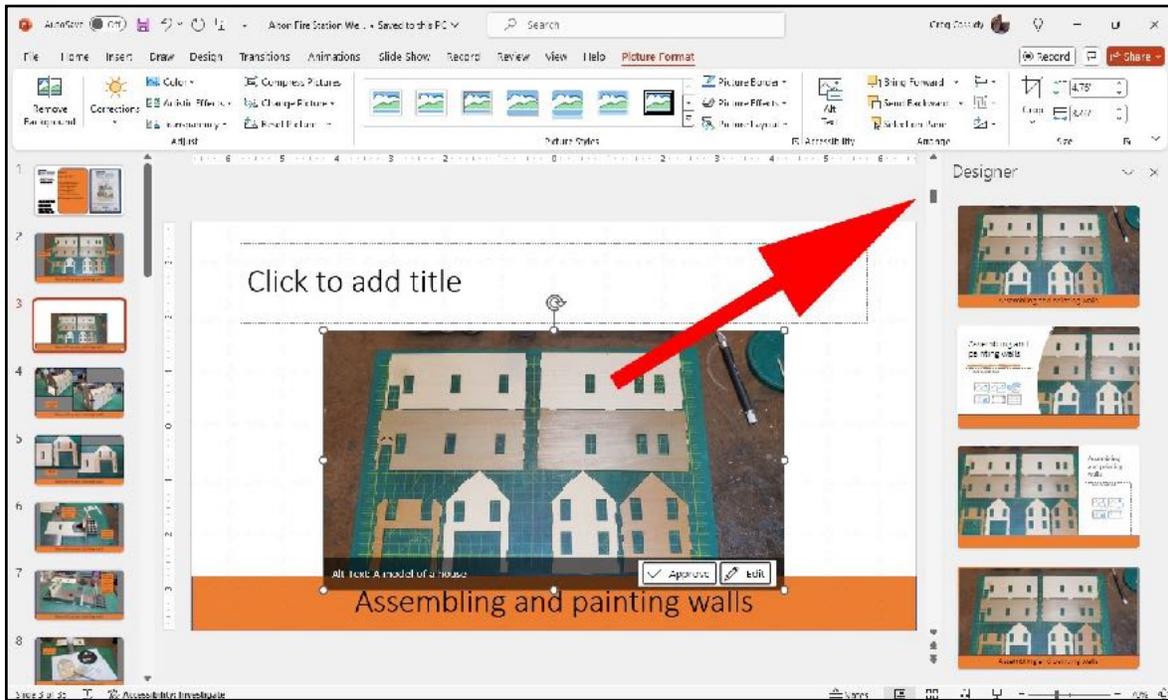
Before you start any sort of clinic or presentation you need to decide on what it's going to be about. It helps to be something that you're familiar with. But if you find yourself getting a little bit out of your depth you can always do research on the subject. The bonus of that is you learn more. First, for your presentation you'll probably want some pictures. You might want to show pictures of something you've built, whether it's a locomotive, a structure, or a layout. Or your presentation may be on something that you photographed but didn't create. You might want to use some pictures that maybe you didn't take. I'm not here to be a downer but you should think about the consequences of grabbing photos off the internet that you plan to show publicly. If you're doing it in any sort of large-scale setting such as for an

organization like the NMRA, you're going to want to make sure that you have permission to use the photos. You might get away with grabbing something off the internet. But all you need is to get one organization in trouble one time because you used something without getting permission, or at least crediting where you got it from, and let's just say people will be talking about it for a while.

Once you have your photographs together you will need to organize them. What I mean by this is to make sure that the photographs will enhance and explain what you're trying to get across to your audience. I often collect many more photos than I plan to use so that I can make choices when I'm assembling my presentation. I've mentioned the photos being clear and sharp, but you also want them to be instructional. You don't want somebody to be trying to connect the dots of what you're talking about while viewing a photo that doesn't seem to have any connection. It may be that you know why you are showing that photo, but you want to make sure it's clear to the audience. If you're just going to be showing the photos while you talk over them, then all you need to do is get them in the order that you want your narrative to follow. Then whether you're showing them on a screen in a live presentation or in some type of online show you can just step through your photos while you're narrating. You may want to include a little more information than just your photos to be shown while you're talking. Often having a little description or graphic along with the photo can help your viewers understand what it is you're talking about, especially if you're someone who tends to ramble. This is where PowerPoint can be your friend.

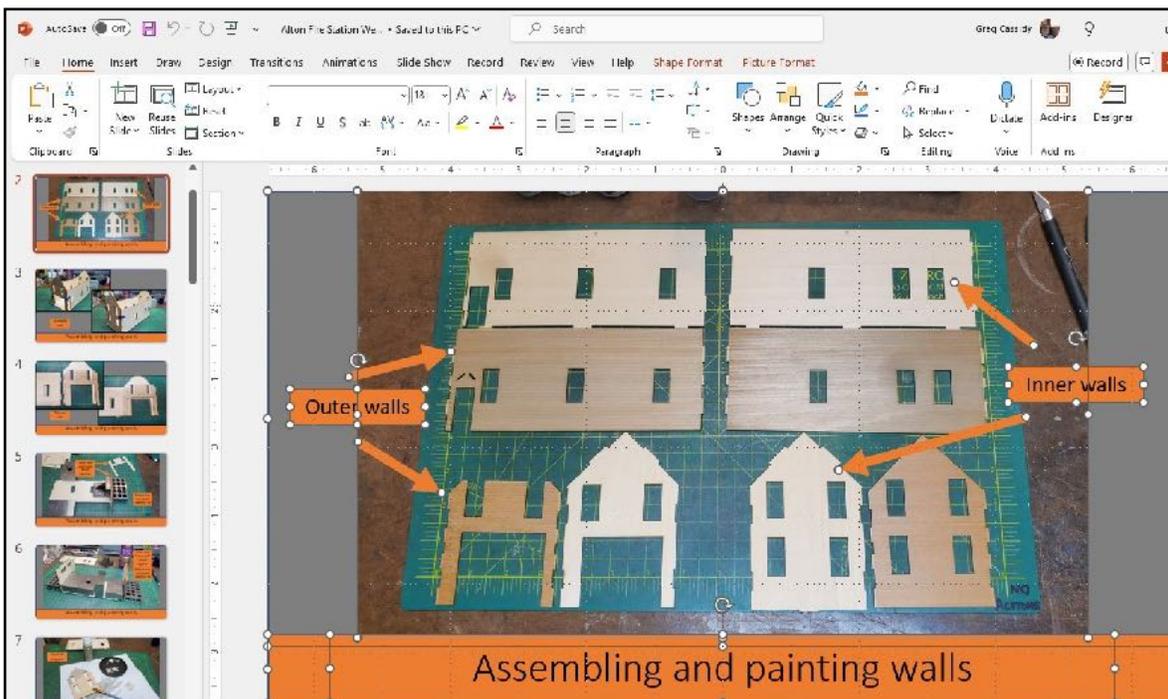
The program is designed for showing slides as they call them, a reference to the old slide show when you would actually be showing photo slides on a projector. The big plus of using this software program is that you can include text with your photo. This points out what you want the viewer to see. You can highlight with an arrow or a box something that you want to stand out in your photograph. You can also include multiple photographs on one slide if you're trying to show a transition or a comparison. If you have a PC-style computer, then you probably already have PowerPoint. It tends to come on most of the computers that have Microsoft operating software. Of course, you can get PowerPoint for the Mac but it's much less likely to come already loaded on it. You can use other programs such as Keynote, which is primarily created for the Mac, but can also be used on a PC. Creating a PowerPoint presentation isn't very difficult. After starting the program, you can load your first photograph and it is very likely PowerPoint Designer will come up with a number of recommendations for a theme (**Photo 2**).

I've seen presentations where PowerPoint was used for no more than just showing the photograph, and I've seen other ones where PowerPoint was wielded like an artist's brush using its features to enhance the presentation. Once you start playing with it a little bit, you'll be able to find how the most common features work such as adding text and scaling your photographs. And, as I said, there are



*Photo 2: Using Designer in PowerPoint.*

plenty of tutorials online that you can follow. It's just a matter of how much time you want to spend on your presentation. When I start creating a presentation, I'll usually think about whether the information that I want to be sharing with my audience can be better conveyed using photographs or text. Usually, it is a combination of both (Photo 3).



*Photo 3: Laying out graphics in PowerPoint.*

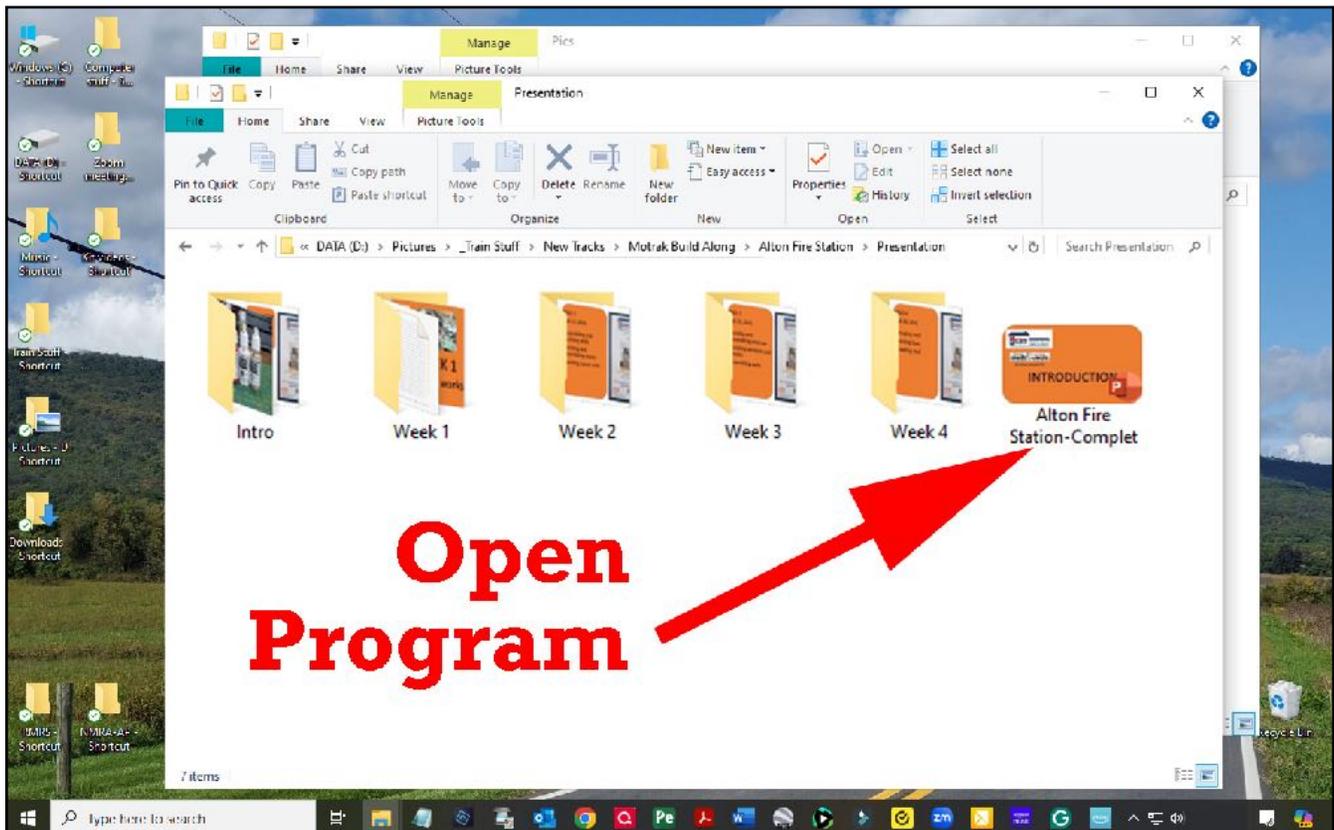
I find it difficult to just put a photograph on my PowerPoint slide and then slap a line of text or two on top of that. There's nothing wrong with it and it can be a very concise way of getting information across. But I guess I'm a graphics tinkerer and I often can't leave well enough alone. So, it's hard for me to go with a simple design when I can embellish it and dig into a little bit of creativity, even if I'm just trying to get across the simple point of how you can stain some wood. Once you've included your photographs, then it's a good idea to decide how you're going to narrate as you're showing them. I've seen very successful presentations where all the presenter did was show the pictures and then he would just talk about each one. This can work well if you're very familiar with the subject and have a good idea of what you want to share with your audience. I've also seen clinics where there was a lot of technical data, and the presenter was actually working from a script to make sure every piece of information was included correctly. You can decide how you want to approach your presentation.

If you are giving a live clinic and using PowerPoint, you'll most likely have some type of digital projector. You will just put your PowerPoint program onto a flash drive. Load it into the laptop connected to the projector. This will allow you to display it onto a screen so that your audience can follow along. The same presentation can also be shown in online clinics; and if this is the case most likely you'll be using Zoom. It's actually quite easy to use, but having been in weekly Zoom meetings for the last four years you'd be surprised how easy it is to also mess it up. Many of us are comfortable with computers, and learning programs such as PowerPoint or Zoom is just another notch on the belt. I've also run into people who are quite proficient at getting through their emails and other computer tasks but then get completely lost once they get into a Zoom program. One thing that I find sometimes makes it a little more difficult is if you're working with more than one monitor. While sometimes this can actually open up more control over your presentation it can also be a double-edged sword that can cause more confusion and lead to difficulty being able to show what you want to. So, I'll just describe how you would show a PowerPoint presentation in Zoom if you're working on a PC computer with a single monitor. Odds are you're most likely to be in a show that someone else is hosting, although this doesn't really make a difference.

Since internet speeds can vary widely throughout the country and even in neighborhoods depending on your internet provider, it would be worth seeing how well your internet is working before trying to present something online. I've seen too many shows where the presenter suddenly freezes, or their speech gets garbled because of slow internet speeds. Uploading video over the internet is one of the most data-intensive things you can do with your computer. To check your internet speed all you need to do is open your browser and type in [www.speedtest.net](http://www.speedtest.net). The lovely bots at Ookla will run a speed test for your download and upload speeds. Zoom's minimum internet speed requirement for HD video is 1.5 Mbps for group calls. However, to ensure a strong Zoom experience, an internet speed of at least 10 Mbps is recommended, giving room for other network activities without reducing call quality.

Your upload speeds will typically be slower than download speeds. As an example, my FiOS upload speeds are usually in the 700~800 Mbps range and I never have any problems sharing items online. Your milage may vary.

Before you enter the Zoom meeting where you'll be presenting, you will want to be set up for sharing. To do this, make sure that on your desktop you've not only opened the folder that your presentation is in but that you've also opened your presentation, typically by double clicking on it (**Photo 4**). This will likely fill up most of your screen, but you should still have the taskbar across the bottom where you can access Zoom. Once you're in a Zoom meeting, the first thing you need to make sure of is that the host has activated sharing for all participants, otherwise you won't be able to share anything. To share something with the rest of the audience you'll go to the green button on the bottom of the screen in the middle that says **Share (Photo 5)**. This will open a window in the middle of your Zoom program. In that window you're likely to see a few items, one of which will be the Zoom screen. One of the other windows, which is typically on the left under **Application Windows** will be your PowerPoint program. You will want to open this by highlighting it and clicking the blue **Share** button at the bottom of the window (**Photo 6**). This will then open your PowerPoint program on both your screen in the Zoom window and on the audience's screen.



*Photo 4: Have your PowerPoint Program open before sharing.*

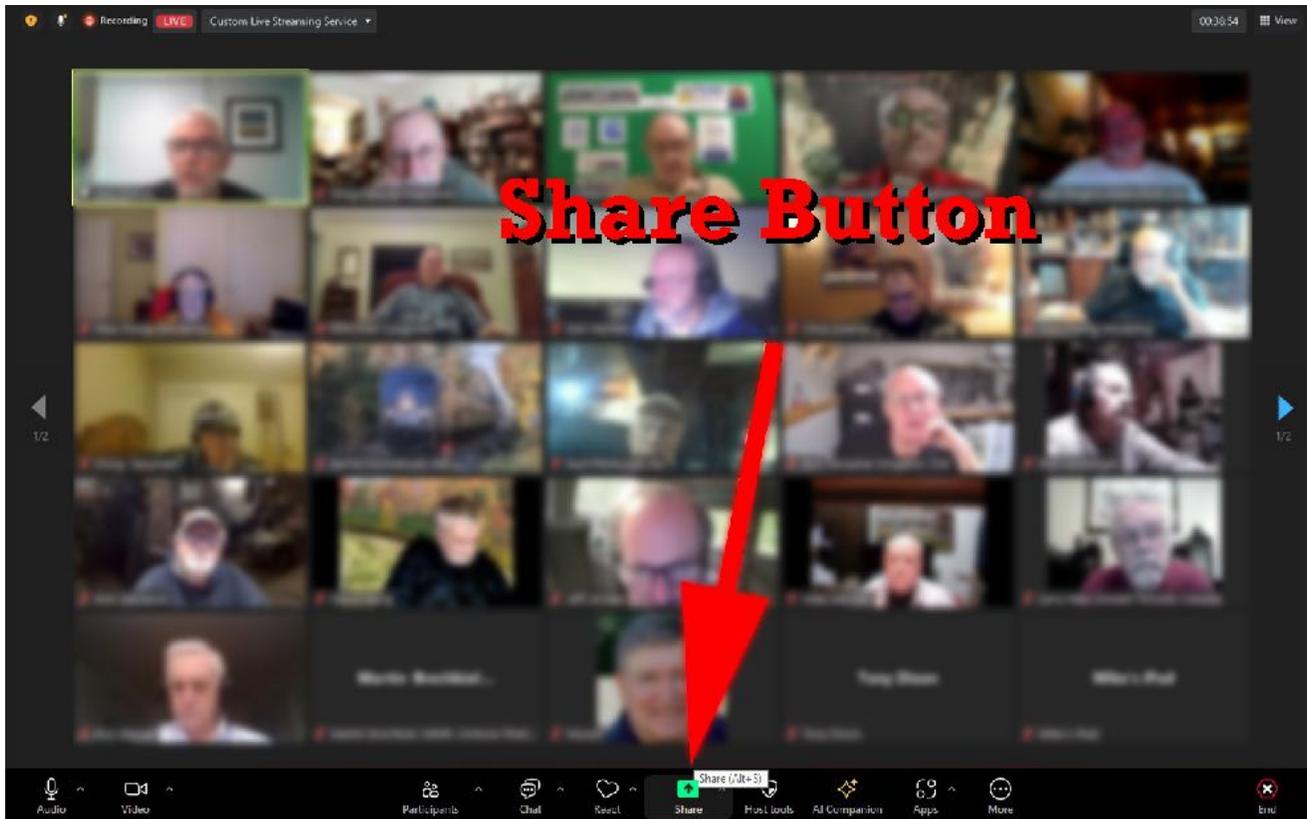


Photo 5: The Green Share Button in Zoom.

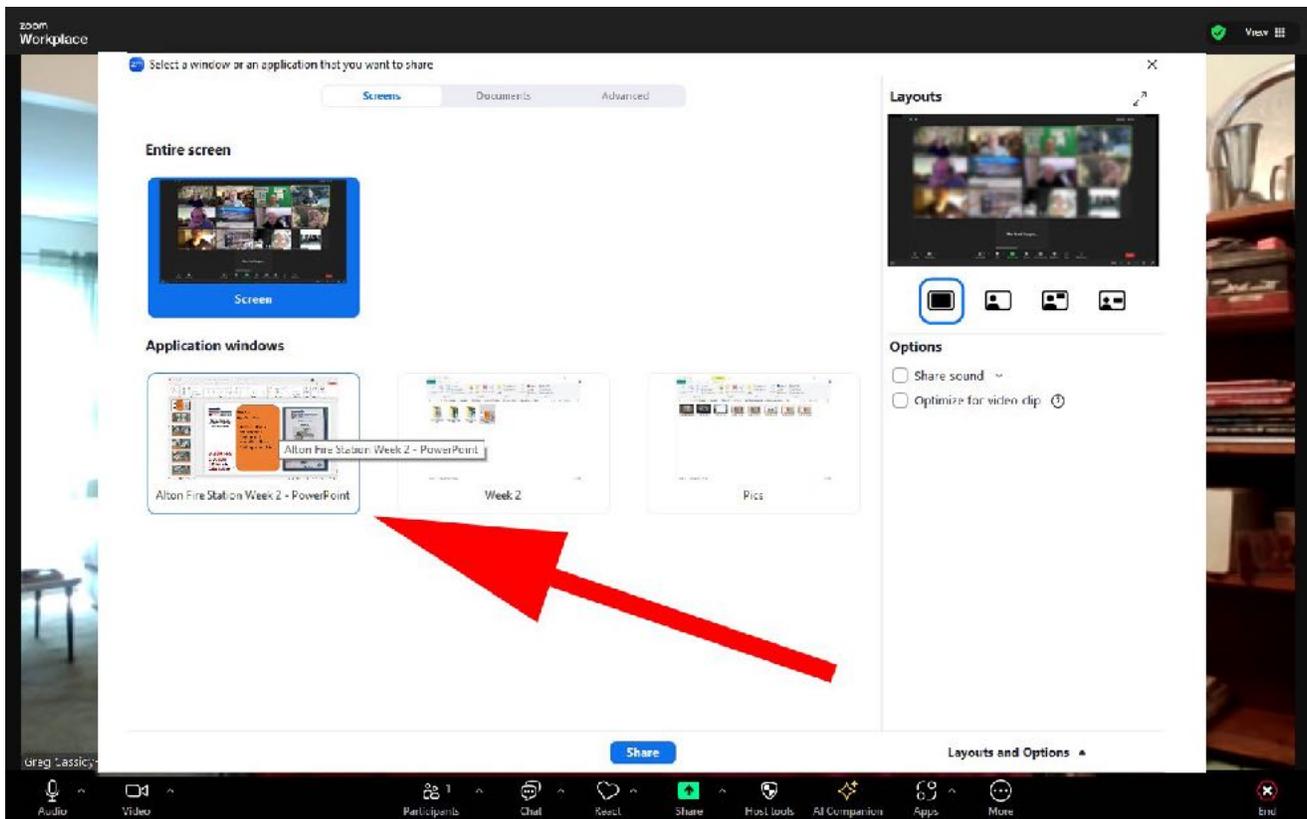
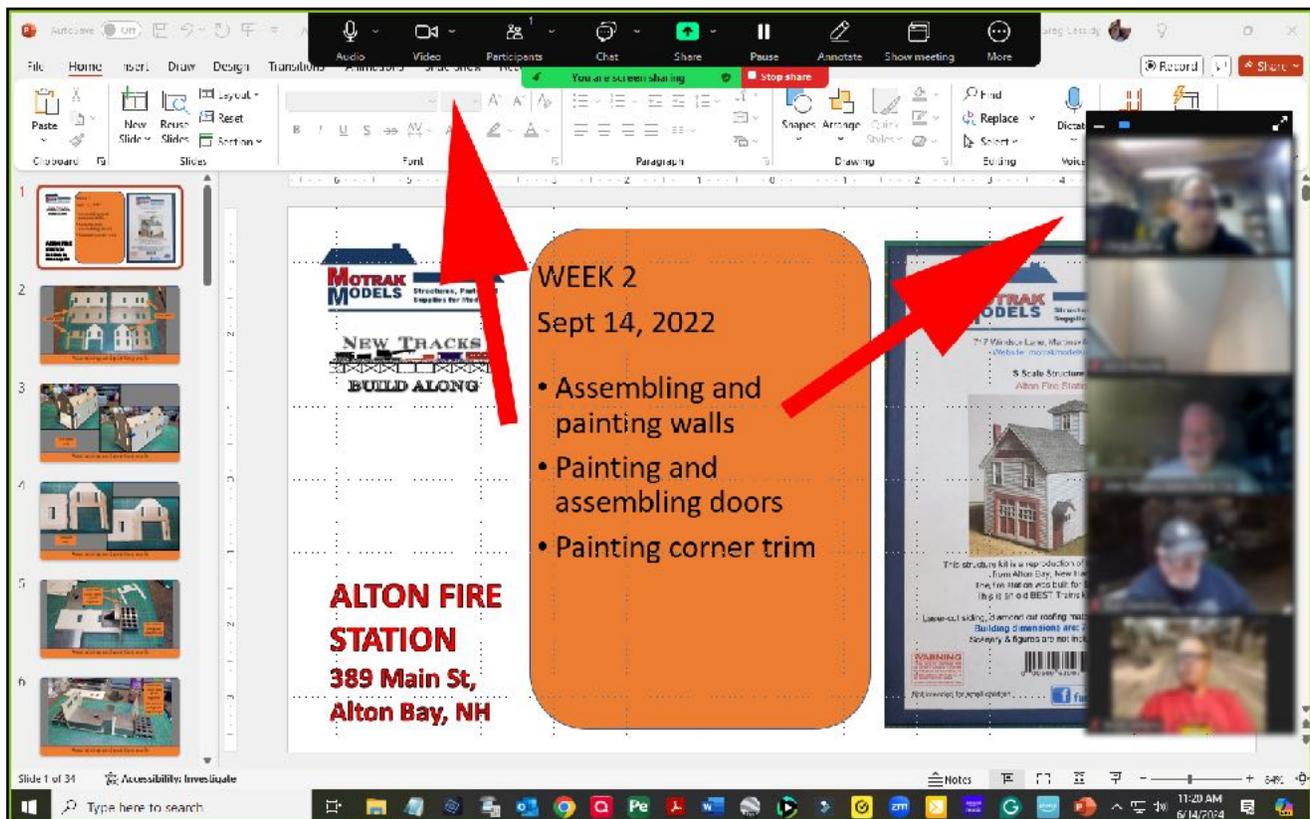


Photo 6: Select your Slide Show and click Share.

Here is a word of warning that seems to get some people in trouble. Now that you're in control of showing your PowerPoint program you need to make sure that you're able to get to the controls you need to for that. And since every participant is able to set up their Zoom window of the meeting to their preference, you might have some windows covering some of your controls. By this I mean some controls in Zoom either at the top or on the right that show the number of participants (all of those happy smiling faces waiting to hear your words of wisdom) (**Photo 7**). Typically, I will minimize all those windows before I start to share something just so I don't have to be concerned about any of my controls being blocked.



*Photo 7: This shows how Zoom can cover some of PowerPoint's controls.*

Once you've opened PowerPoint in your sharing window it will still look the way it did when you were creating it. By this I mean it will have all of your slides on the left with the one that's highlighted open, usually the first slide. At this point you want to get into **Slide Show** mode. And again, just because we don't have enough to think about, PowerPoint gives you two different ways of doing this. The one I typically follow is in the bottom right corner. There's a little icon that looks like a screen, and by clicking this it will open up Slide Show mode (**Photo 8**). The other way is in the toolbar list on top. You can click on Slide Show, and this gives you the choice of starting it at the beginning or at a selected slide (**Photo 9**). Either of these will start your slideshow presentation and at this point you're good to go. It's just a matter of narrating as you're stepping through the slides.

Oh, and one thing that I can't stress enough. Make sure you've unmuted yourself before you start talking. I'm trying to think of the longest conversation I saw someone hold on Zoom while they were muted and everyone else was saying "You're muted!" but they were just busy going through their program. It happens, just try not to let it happen to you.

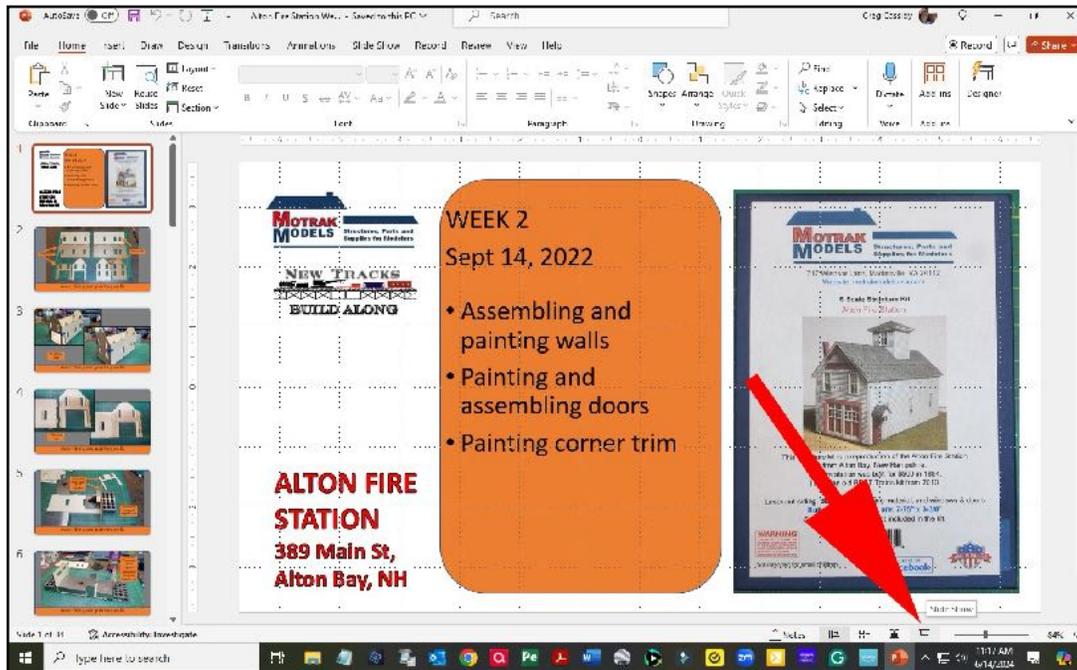


Photo 8: One way to start your Slide Show.

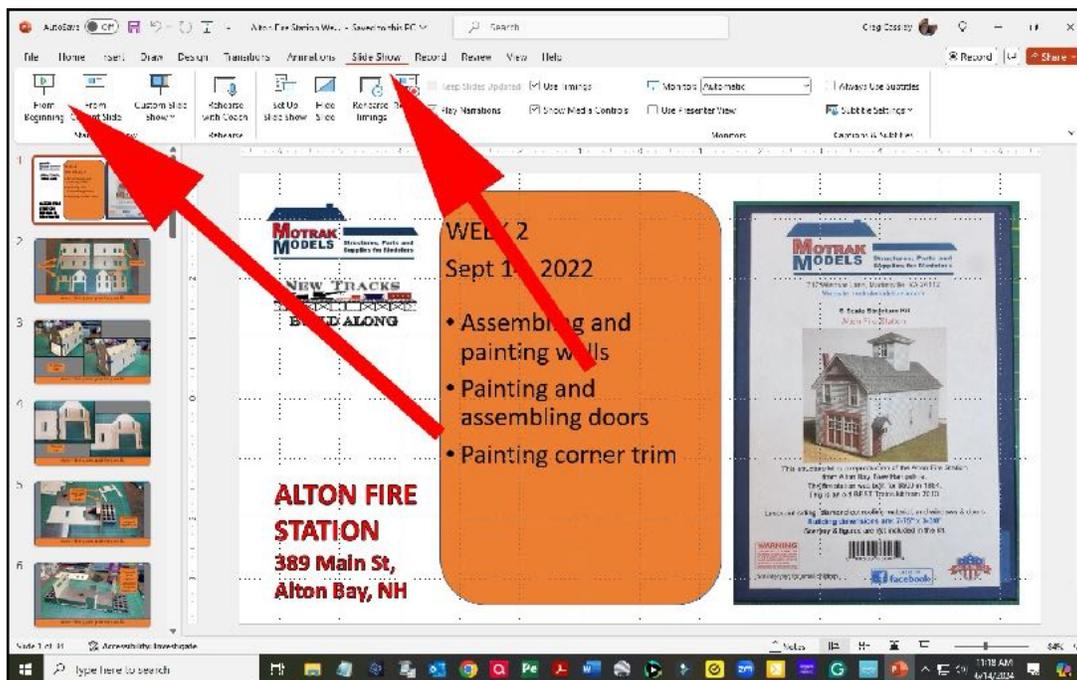


Photo 9: The Other way to start your Slide Show.

Another exercise I used to do when I was preparing manufacturers to present on the New Tracks show was going online with them ahead of time for them to practice. If you want your online presentation to go well, there's nothing wrong with having a friend or a spouse set aside a few minutes where you can practice opening your presentation in Zoom with them as the audience. And this can be for something as simple as seeing how the share operation works; or you can take it as far as going through your entire presentation. This way you're also able to get feedback even if it is your spouse telling you how grammatically inept you are.

Earlier I had mentioned that my presentations had been used to help secure my NMRA Achievement Program Model Railroad Author certificate. If you look at the Statement for Qualifications form of the Author AP, you'll see that it mentions both published articles and electronic publications. But Section B talks about live clinics (**Photo 10**). This is where doing live presentations can help you if you want to work towards that certificate. And in my case, some of the online presentations and clinics that I had held were also counted under part C: Instructional Videotapes and Multimedia. Now that I've earned my Authors certificate, the live clinics that I do count towards my Association Volunteer AP certificate.



**ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM  
MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR  
STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS FORM  
May 2006**

page 2 of 3

**B. Live Clinics**  
These are live presentations given at conventions, Division meetings, etc. In order to be eligible for credit, the clinic must be prepared and presented by the member applying for the certificate, it must be at least 30 minutes in length, and it must include a handout (a copy of the handout must be included with the certificate application.)

**Points Earned For Live Clinics**

Item	National	Region	Division

A live clinic can only be claimed for Model Railroad Author points once, even if it presented more than once. Additional presentations of a clinic earn credit towards Association Volunteer.

**Points Earned for Live Clinics**

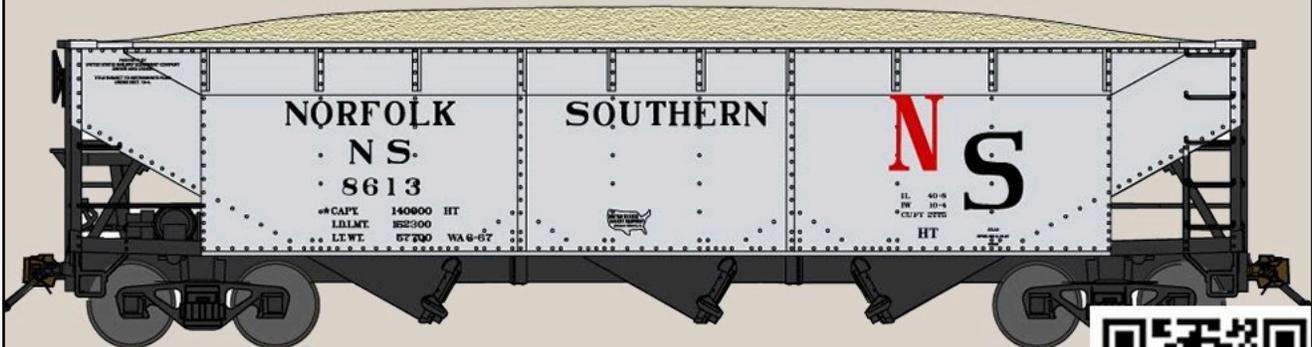
Item	National	Region	Division
Association Volunteer Points	3	2	2

**C. Instructional Video Tapes and Multi-Media**  
These are presentations that are specifically created by the member applying for the certificate using video tape or other multi-media. This production process will generally involve such things as preparing a shooting script or story board. Creating close up shots to illustrate the material, etc. Simply having a live clinic video taped is not acceptable. If the presentation is non interactive (for example, a video tape), then it earns credit at the rate of 1/2 point per minute of the presentation. If the presentation is interactive (requiring input from the viewer as it goes), then it earns credit as an "Electronic Publication", described below. To earn credit for an Instructional Video Tape or Multi-Media Presentation, it must be submitted to the Member Services Department Director for use by the

*Photo 10: NMRA Author AP requirements.*

Now that you're armed with the information on how to present your technical knowledge and expertise with fellow modelers please go out and do so. A large part of the hobby is learned through sharing information. I look forward to learning something from you.

# Carolina Piedmont Division, Mid-Eastern Region



**N Scale version  
coming in Jan 2024!**



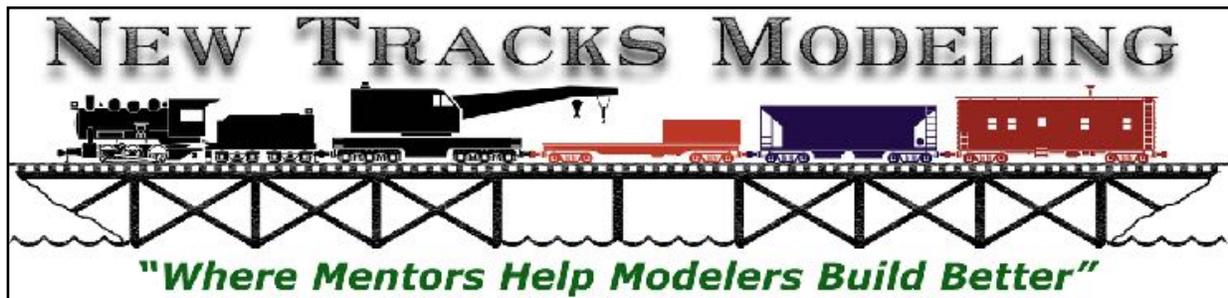
Exclusive Limited Edition Custom Decorated by Bluford Shops  
Norfolk Southern Rwy **N Scale** 70-Ton Offset Triple Hoppers  
*2 Road Numbers Available*

Exclusive run of 86xx series N scale Norfolk Southern 70-ton Offset Hopper. These ex-B&LE cars were leased by Norfolk Southern from U.S. Ry Equipment in 1967. They were photographed in service and all have lightweight dates that was always stenciled to the right of the car's light weight on the left side under reporting marks. WA was for Washington, Indiana on the B&O, the old B&O car shops on their route to St. Louis. The shops were closed and US Ry Equip acquired them.

Carolina Piedmont Division is offering these in two unique road numbers, 8613 & 8724 for sale as limited edition kits using Bluford Shops 70-Ton Offset Hopper car. Pricing is \$25 per car plus USPS shipping.

To order, visit <http://cpd13.org> or email [railroad@nc.rr.com](mailto:railroad@nc.rr.com) today!

<https://cpd13.org>



[newtracksmodeling.com](http://newtracksmodeling.com)

# Modifying an Accurail Reading (X-29) Steel Sheathed Boxcar

By Alan Mende

Looking for something to do, I took an Accurail Reading steel boxcar that had been sitting on a shelf for who knows how long. It's number, 100623, indicated it was a Class XMt boxcar. I went to the [Reading Company Technical and Historical Society's web page](#) and found a photo of one of these cars ([Photo 1](#)).



*Photo 1: Reading XMt boxcar (courtesy of Reading Company Technical and Historical Society).*

I immediately saw that the car did not have ladders like the ones supplied in the kit but drop grab irons for the side and end ladders. I drilled out the ladder mounting holes and filled them with Evergreen styrene 0.020" rod. After drilling holes for the grab irons, I attached all of them, including those on the end beams and on the left side of the car, with CA ([Photo 2](#)). I made roping staples from Detail Associates No. 6214 roping rings. The stirrup steps that came with the kit were incorrect, so I made my own from Detail Associates No. 2524 0.010" x 0.030" flat brass bar that I annealed in a flame so I could bend the attaching points at right angles. I used Detail Associates No. 2203 1/4" NBWs to fasten the stirrups in place ([Photo 3](#)).



*Photo 2: Missing grab irons attached.*

*Photo 3: Stirrup attached.*



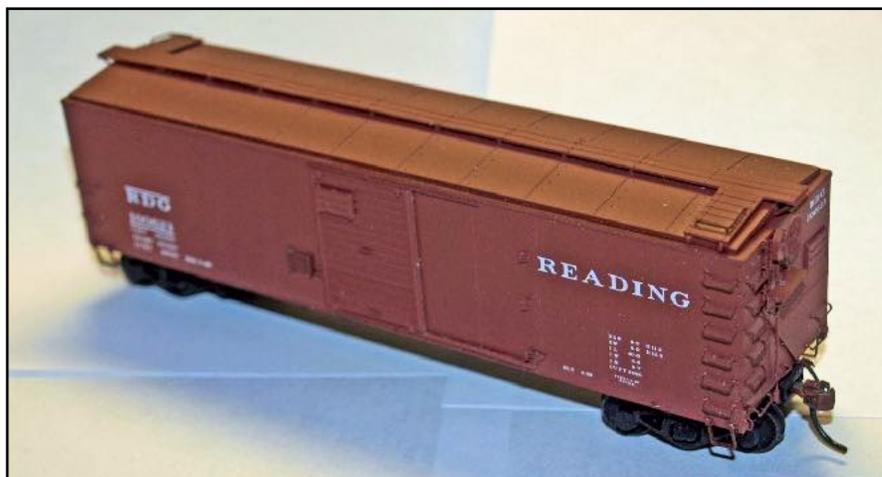
I had a pair of Eastern Car Works' Taylor freight car trucks that matched the prototype. I did not notice until later that the air reservoir on the prototype wasn't mounted transversely, but rather parallel to the center sill. With care, I removed it and relocated it correctly. While all the brake rods are included with the kit, I didn't add brake piping; it was just more work than it was worth.

The model was missing the tack boards to the left of the doors; I made them from bits of Evergreen 2050, 0.020" thick by 0.050" spaced V-groove sheet and bits of 1" x 2" strip ([Photo 4](#)).

*Photo 4: Missing tack boards made from styrene and attached to the left of the doors.*



The biggest question was what color to paint the 0.020" plugs and the grab irons. After trying quite a few paints, I decided on Tru-Color TCP-831 flat depot brown. It's almost a perfect match for the factory applied paint. Any differences will be hidden during weathering. Additionally, I painted the bottom of the car black, and none too carefully since it wouldn't normally be seen. The finished car is presented in [Photo 5](#).



*Photo 5: Finished boxcar*

## Division Reports for 2023 - Submitted by VP Gary Brown

Prepared by Superintendents from each Division of the Mid-Eastern Region. These reports are printed as is without editing or corrections.

### **DIVISION 2: POTOMAC - by Ernie Little, MMR**



#### Potomac Division (2), Mid-Eastern Region Yearly Division Report

Reporting Period: January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023

#### Meeting Times and Places.

Division monthly Board of Directors meetings were held on the third Tuesday of the month using Zoom. We had an in-person Board of Directors meeting on June 10, 2023, as a part of the joint meet with the Chesapeake Division.

Our bylaws required Annual Meeting was held by Zoom this year on April 30, 2023.

Annual Elections were conducted by using Election Buddy with sincere thanks to John Hoyt for his assistance. Ballots were physically mailed to those members that have not provided the NMRA with an email address. Board Meetings have continued by means of Zoom and have been held regularly on a monthly schedule.

#### Change in Officers from last year (including AP Coordinator).

**Contact information:**

Name	Address	Contact Info	Position	NMRA Number
Ernest Little, MMR <a href="mailto:Super@potomac-nmra.org">Super@potomac-nmra.org</a>	10162 Woodbury Dr Manassas VA 20109	571-383-7316	Superintendent	129108
Alex Belida, MMR <a href="mailto:Sr-asst-super@potomac-nmra.org">Sr-asst-super@potomac-nmra.org</a>	705 New Mark Esplanade Rockville MD 20850	301-424-8164	Senior Assistant Superintendent	167742
Ken Wilson <a href="mailto:Asst-super@potomac-nmra.org">Asst-super@potomac-nmra.org</a>	88 Frazier Rd Warrenton, VA 20186	571-238-8864	Assistant Superintendent **	129108
Lee Stoermer <a href="mailto:Clerk@potomac-nmra.org">Clerk@potomac-nmra.org</a>	24407 Indigo Run Lane Aldie, VA 20105-	928-580-3209	Clerk	138185
Jerry Stanley <a href="mailto:Paymaster@potomac-nmra.org">Paymaster@potomac-nmra.org</a>	11552 Hereford Ct Hume, VA 22639	703-595-8081	Paymaster	142333
Mathew A. Thompson, MMR	13000 Triple Crown Lp Gainesville, VA 20155	703-743-1895	AP Coordinator 1/1/23 to 6/1/23	081125
Martin Brechbiel, MMR <a href="mailto:Achievement-program@potomac-nmra.org">Achievement-program@potomac-nmra.org</a>	3404 Monarch Lane Annandale, VA 22003	703-309-3082	AP Coordinator 6/1/23 - current	114353

\*\* Due to election of new Superintendent the BOD appointed new Assistant Superintendent at the 5/21/2023 BOD meeting.

**Division web site address :**

<http://potomac-nmra.org/PDnewsite/Main/Home.php>

In accordance with the Division's bylaws a review was conducted resulting in an editorial change. This change was caused by the action taken at the Mid-Eastern Region's Convention held in Altoona, Pennsylvania on October of 2023 Division boundaries were adjusted to eliminate "orphan" NMRA memberships. The change to the Division's bylaws was to add the designated additional seven counties to the Division.

### **Membership**

According to the information provided to the Division from the MER as of November, 2023 our current membership is 235, which is down from 263 in November 2022. This includes 4 members that were previously "orphans", and after action taken by the MER Board of Directors at the MER convention in Altoona, Pa. on October 22, 2023, division boundaries were changed, and the division received seven additional counties that were not previously assigned to a division. It should be noted that the significant loss of members took place between November of 2022, which was the last membership extract provided to the division in 2022, and the next membership extract that was provided in March of 2023. The lack of good membership information has continued to be a serious detriment to the operations of the Division. We have only a passing knowledge of new members in the past six months, are not made aware of memberships being transferred to other divisions or deaths of members. It is hoped with the NMRA updating the membership tracking software (as stated at the MER Superintendent's meeting in Altoona) that we will be able to have better access to membership information.

We have staffed information tables at the Timonium train show and Dulles Expo train shows in 2023 in an attempt to recruit new members and provide information about our Division and the NMRA. We also have held three layout tours, two of which were associated with joint meets, and one associated with a Division meet. At these events, membership forms, information about NMRA benefits, and a Divisional brochure are made available. We have also provided the Divisional brochure to the local train stores in our Division where possible.

We have instituted social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and created a YouTube channel where we post videos of our virtual clinics. With the coming of social media to the Division we also established a social media policy and appointed a social media manager. Our YouTube channel has shown success in that it has averages over 600 viewers per month and we have 511 subscribers to our channel.

The Division will hold elections again in April 2024. These will be conducted by electronic voting by our members with ballots being sent to those members that have not provided the NMRA with an email address. Per the bylaws, the elections will be for two positions in 2024: Assistant Superintendent, and Paymaster. An election Nomination Committee has been formed to oversee nominations and the election.

### **Financial.**

The dollar amount in bank at end of the last accounting period (11/30/2023) was **\$5,619.15**.

We experienced significant difficulty in securing rebate checks from the MER for half of 2022 and both

2023 periods which took more than five months to get reconciled.

In July of 2023 we applied for, were awarded, and used a matching grant from National NMRA to purchase a new portable projection screen, projector tables, presentation pointers for our computers, and new event signs that are used at our meetings.

We do not charge for any event or service currently. However, to cover the costs of venues in the future we will be accepting donations, and we may charge a nominal fee as the costs charged by venues within the Potomac Division are extravagant. Clinicians do charge to cover material costs at Jerry Stanley’s Hobby Barn and other clinic sites this year.

**Achievement Program 2023 highlights**

**Master Model Railroaders**

We had 1 new Master Model Railroaders in 2023, John Griffith.

**Achievement Program Certificates**

We had a total of 12 members receiving certificates in 2023.

Volunteer	1	Paul Hutchins
Association Volunteer	1	Mat Thompson, MMR
Civil	1	John Griffith
Scenery	2	Marty McGuirk Mike Byles
Chief Dispatcher	0	
Author	1	Rich Steinmann
Electrical	3	Bill Mosteller John Griffith Marty McGuirk
Structures	0	
Cars	0	
Motive Power	1	Alex Belida, MMR
Golden Spike	2	Mike Byles Gregg Cassidy

**Division Events/Activities in 2023**

Twelve virtual Clinics, using the Zoom meeting platform, were held in 2023. This program continues to be strong, with an attendance of 20 and 40 and this program will continue in 2024. All the virtual clinics were recorded and placed on the Division’s YouTube channel after they were completed.

In person clinics took place, observing Covid guidelines, with limited attendance (4-6 persons) at our Paymaster’s Hobby Barn, the Knights of Columbus Meeting Hall, and Waldorf Volunteer Fire Department meeting room and were successful. This program will continue into 2024.

Two joint in-person meets were held in 2023. The first was with the Chesapeake Division on June 10th with 26 members in attendance. The meet had five clinics, a modeling popular vote contest, and an in-person Potomac Division Board of Directors Meeting. The second was with the James River Division on November 4<sup>th</sup> with 48 members and one guest in attendance. That meet had seven clinics, a modeling popular vote contest, AP evaluations, and three layouts opened to the Division.

Our annual Operations Saturday took place on March 4, 2023, allowing members to participate in operations sessions on three division member layouts.

One in-person Division meet was held in Waldorf, MD, on August 5<sup>th</sup> with 18 members in attendance. This meet had two clinics, a modeling popular vote contest, and two layouts opened to the division.

One excursion to the outdoor Burnt Tree Industrial Railroad located in Aroda, VA took place on September 10, 2023, where participants operated trains on the 1/8, 7-1/2" scale railroad.

Nine open houses were held in 2023 and were well attended. This program was restarted in April after being suspended in 2020 due to Covid 19 concerns.

#### **Special Projects or working with other organizations.**

We anticipate holding a Spring joint meet with the Chesapeake Division in April or May of 2024 in Maryland and a Fall joint meet with the James River Division in Nov. of 2024.

We are considering participating in an Achievement Program evaluation program, with James River and Chesapeake Divisions, at the September 2024 Mid-Atlantic Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet.

We have provided model railroad related items to a church in our Division that has a youth group that is interested in model railroading. Most of these items are donated by families of deceased model railroaders or others that have an interest in model railroading.

#### **Successful/ new ideas that your Division has tried that might be helpful to other Divisions.**

We initiated participation in social media in February 2023 and we are evaluating the effect of doing so at this time.

In 2022 the Division instituted the "Marshall Abrams Award" which is awarded to one of the division members to recognize the evaluable contributions made to the Division, MER, and National NMRA. Jerry Stanley was the 2023 recipient of this award. This program is continuing and nominations for the 2024 award are being solicited with a deadline of January 1, 2024.

#### **Charitable and Educational Activities**

The Joint Meet with the Chesapeake division, in June 2023, resulted in a collected donation in excess of \$400 for the charity operations overseen by the Church whose venue we used for this meet. The Joint Meet with James River, in November 2023, resulted in a donation of over \$1,000 for the charity operations overseen by the Church whose venue we used for the event.

### NMRA and MER Convention Activity

The Division had eight members attend the MER convention in Altoona, PA in October 2023 and had six Potomac Division members present clinics at this event. One member won first prize for steam in the MER model contest. One Division member attended the National NMRA Convention and it is unknown if any Division members attended any other Region's conventions.

### Ongoing & Future Directions

The Board members remain committed to working to fulfill the requests and desires of the Division's membership. The attendance response exemplified by the attendance at the virtual and in-person Hobby Barn events, as well as our Joint Meets clearly reflects a significant level of success in this effort. This is also very clearly satisfying some measure of the socialization aspect of the hobby as we can gather as a group, see one another, and talk to one another. We do remain hopeful of securing additional meeting venues for in-person events in 2024. A challenge to the Board is the lack of venues for Division meets that are financially within the ability of the Division. Many of the venues used in the past are now charging for their use and/or charge an additional clean up fee. The cost of these venues is above what the division can afford.

The continued publication of the expanded Division *Potomac Flyer* newsletter continues to be an excellent method to communicate with our Division members as well as others outside the Division that subscribe to it. Publication is done through use of an email list maintained by the division. In November of 2023 the *Potomac Flyer* website page was overhauled to include thumbnail images of all of the issues and links to the full issue. The *Potomac Flyer* has had a regular challenge feature each issue since 2021, where the Division's members submit photos and associated brief articles for a selected topic like motive power or scenery. The *Potomac Flyer* challenges showcase our members' modeling efforts and have continued to be of great interest to the membership with an average of 10-20 submissions per issue. This feature will continue for the foreseeable future.

The Potomac Division *Potomac Flyer* challenge entries are also featured on the main page of our Division website with a rotating photo carousel that also contains links to the descriptions of entries published in *The Potomac Flyer*. The carousel is runs on our website for two months and also available on a dedicated and separate page that contains all the submissions since the feature was initiated.

The *Potomac Flyer* Editor also publishes "Potomac Division *Newsbriefs*" which are published in the months between release of *The Potomac Flyer*. The *Newsbriefs* are handled in the same manner as the *Potomac Flyer* relative to distribution, and website availability.

Social media was added to our toolbox in January of 2023 to promote the Division, Region and National NMRA, in general, and increase model railroading presence in the community. The social media forums we have engaged with are Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Our social media accounts are managed by a Board appointed social media manager. A social media policy was developed by the division to provide guidelines for use of social media.

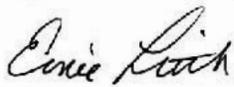
### Where in your opinion could the MER provide support to your division?

1. We continue to celebrate the MER forwarding 100% of the dues rebate to the Divisions. However, support of Divisions by National NMRA remains completely inadequate given the

belief that the Divisions are the most important level of the NMRA. We urge the MER Board to ask National to provide a more representative level of support to the Divisions. Two dollars a member is not sufficient to operate a division. We believe the allocation should be increased to at least three, if not five dollars per member per year.

2. The matching grant program currently on hold by the Region is really needed to support the acquisition of A/V equipment for the Division particularly given that the events that the Division will be promoting will be either virtual or looking forward these will be hybrid live in person and broadcast via Zoom. As such, upgrades and expansion of existing equipment is anticipated as a highly probable area of need to be able to continue to deliver quality programming for our members. We formally request that the MER Board re-activate this program.
3. The current guidance, effectively none from the MER, on implementation of the At-Risk policy as dictated by National has been completely inadequate. Questions abound regarding the need for affidavits (legal documents), their use and retention, etc. This can deeply impact open house events as well as any larger gathering such as possible convention hosting. Guidance, in plain and clear language, is requested along with answers to questions.
4. The structure of the AP program as it pertains to Volunteer needs revision particularly for members working directly on recruitment to the NMRA. The points rewards vs. actual time and effort are not commensurate in scope and value. We need the MER Board to champion this change if Divisions are going to shoulder the burden of recruitment.
5. The well-known issues pertaining to the membership roster provided by National trickle down to the Divisions, compromising the Division's ability to contact and greet new members, and to continue to communicate with all their existing members. We need the basic information -- member's names and contact info -- in a more timely way. There is a real, immediate need for executing this.
6. Over the past three years we have been presenting virtual clinics as well as in person clinics on a monthly schedule. Looking forward, we could use more clinicians to provide a good program for our members. One might think that the Clinics page on the MER web site could serve as a resource for the Divisions. However, the information there appears to be grossly out of date. We ask that the MER please update the information and revive this page. We are aware that the MER web site is being updated; however, this page and its content crosses over all Division boundaries and needs immediate attention.

**Superintendent's Name and Signature.**

 12/20/23

Ernie Little, MMR  
Superintendent, Potomac Division

PS - "Due to my oversight, comment 6, in the report for the Potomac Division, remained in the report instead of being deleted. I was pushing to get the report done for submission to the MER and made an oversight in not deleting this item. I apologize for this item remaining in the report and the bad light it creates on the clinician listing."

Thanks.

Ernie Little  
Superintendent, Potomac Division

## **DIVISION 3: PHILADELPHIA - By Joe Walters, MMR**

**Yearly Division Report  
Reporting Period: 2023**

**Division:** Philadelphia Division

**Officers and Directors:**

**Officers:**

**Superintendent:**

Joseph Walters, MMR  
840 N GWYNN CT                      Bear    DE    19701  
302-521-5884  
[josephwalters@yahoo.com](mailto:josephwalters@yahoo.com)

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215-740-6269  
[robhink@gmail.com](mailto:robhink@gmail.com)

**Clerk:**

Charles Long  
227 LOCUST RD                      Ft Washington    PA    19034  
215-247-1951  
[prtpc17@navpoint.com](mailto:prtpc17@navpoint.com)

**Treasurer:**

Feeney Kevin  
1447 WHEATSHEAF LN                      Abington    PA    19001  
203-246-1675  
[ic4277eb@yahoo.com](mailto:ic4277eb@yahoo.com)

**Directors at Large:**

Michael Dettinger  
435 MUSTANG RD                      Downingtown    PA    19335  
972-795-1348  
[detting@comcast.net](mailto:detting@comcast.net)

Jeffrey L. Witt  
117 CHESTNUT VALLEY DR                      Doylestown    PA  
215-340-9769  
[jlwitt@yahoo.com](mailto:jlwitt@yahoo.com)

Steve Wysowski  
213 SPRING LN                      Royersford    PA    19468  
(860) 329-2055  
[swysowski@gmail.com](mailto:swysowski@gmail.com)

**Division website address:** [www.phillynmra.org](http://www.phillynmra.org)

**Membership:** A total of 237 members at the end of 2023, versus a total of 254 at the end of 2022 a net change of -17 members. Membership recruitment efforts continue at the various local Greenberg Train Shows (Oaks PA, Wilmington, DE) as well as the Philadelphia Train show each December.

Phil. Division. # 3

Achievement Program

2023

Master Builder. Scenery  
 Electrical Golden. Spike  
 Steve Richardson.  
 Steve Richardson  
 Mike Byle  
 Steve Wysowski  
 Bill Fagan  
 Steve Wysowski  
 Steve Salotti

Model Railroad Engineer -  
 Steve Salotti  
 Steve Richardson

Master Builder Structures.  
 Model Railroad Engineer - Civil  
 Steve Salotti  
 Steve Salotti  
 Steve Richardson

Chief Dispatcher  
 Mark Wallace  
 Eric Devinus

Master Model Railroader  
 Steve Salotti # 741

NMRA Recruitment Opportunities

January 2023. Oaks Train show. , Greater Phila. Expo Center

June 2023 Oaks Train show , Greater Phila. Expo Center

December 9, 2023 Phila Division /Rockledge model rr Train show, N.E. Phila Cannstatter (CVV)

At this time, we have no plans in place to host an Regional or National Convention

The Division hosted the 2019 Regional Convention  
 The Division Hosted the 2006 National Convention

**Financial:** At the end of 2023, the Philadelphia Division had approximately 410,235.72 in our checking account, \$7,210.08 in the savings account, and \$8,115.89 in a CD. Total available cash is \$25,561.69.

**Division Events:**

**January Meet: Saturday January XX**

Location: NJ

Joint Meet with New Jersey Division, each division provided one clinician.

Attendance: 25 Philadelphia Division Members

**February Meet: Saturday February 18<sup>th</sup>**

Location: Allentown

Joint Meet with Susquehanna Division, each division provided one clinician.

Attendance: 28 Philadelphia Division Members

**April Meet: Saturday April 15<sup>th</sup>**

Location: St. Alban's Church, Newtown Square, PA

Two clinics presented

Attendance: 27 Members

**June Meet: Saturday June 10<sup>th</sup>**

Location: Alverthorpe Park, Abington, PA

Annual Business Meeting, followed by a clinic. Picnic lunch proved free.

Attendance: 32 Members and 1 guest

**September Meet: Saturday September 9<sup>th</sup>**

Location: College Settlement Day Camp, Horsham, PA

Two clinics presented

Attendance: 29 Members plus 2 guests

**November Meet: Saturday November 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Location:** Brandywine Town Center, Wilmington, DE

Joint Meet with New Jersey Division, each division provided one clinician.

Attendance: 32 Members



**DIVISION 4: TIDEWATER - By John Robey**

**Yearly Division Report**

January 1 thru December 31, 2023

**Division:** Tidewater Division 04 Website: [www.nmra-mer-tidewater.org](http://www.nmra-mer-tidewater.org)  
Newsletter Published 6 times yearly is the “[Callboard](#)”

**Meetings:** Meetings are held in January, March, May, July, September and November on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday morning from 0900 to approximately 12 Noon and are held in the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, 424 Kings Grant, Virginia Beach, VA. Minutes of the meetings are published in the Callboard.

**Officers:** Superintendent: John Robey  
Assistant Superintendent: Mark Nieting  
Paymaster: Greg Warth  
Timekeeper: Robert Cook (MMR)  
Director: John Cryderman  
Director: John Fallon  
Director: Fred Humphrey (Immediate Past Superintendent)  
AP Coordinator: Chuck Davis (MMR) (appointed in September 2022)

Elections are held in January with a new or reelected board assuming duties at the Official Annual Business Meeting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of January.

**Achievement Program Highlights:**

Division member William Wapples was awarded his Achievement Program certificate for Electrical Engineering.

**Activities from the past year:**

The Division sponsored a White Elephant model train swap and sales meet in January to benefit the Division coffers. The Assistant Superintendent designed, developed and produced a color tri-fold promotional brochure for the Division. Division members organized and displayed model train history and items in showcases at the Virginia Beach Central library during the month of November to commemorate National Model Train Month. The Division's November meeting was an Open House Train Show at the Library celebrating Model Railroading as a hobby. We had a display table for each scale staffed by a representative of that prototype. We had N, Z, HO, O, G and Lego (L scale) all displaying models of their scale. In addition, we had a pre-WWII O scale layout, and two N scale layouts, a NMRA information and recruiting table, a table of free model railroad magazines and books, and the Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads. Several members attended the 2023 MER Convention in Altoona PA. Several members have started an Operations SIG activity. These members have conducted nine operating sessions to develop the special interests and also to facilitate members who are working on their Achievement Program.

The Tidewater Division membership has remaining about the same numbers as previous years. During the MER/NMRA initiative to include "orphan members", the Tidewater Division was not affected to change boundaries.

**Special Projects or working with other organizations:**

Five Division members have organized and developed plans for a Model Railroad Museum of Hampton Roads. ([www.mrmhr.org](http://www.mrmhr.org)). The plan and concept of this museum is to provide a public venue to educate, teach and expand the enjoyment of model railroad hobbies. The committee has now met with and organized STEM and Arts as part of the endeavor. The concept is to have major clubs from all scales to be represented with an operational layout for public display. To date, agreements have been made for G scale, O scale, S scale, HO scale, N scale, and Lego clubs to participate. This volunteer committee has met with City officials, City Mayors and Major Business coordinators to promote the museum project.

One member, Gary Brown, has continued to lead a charity program of providing model train sets for Christmas gifts to families that would otherwise not be able to provide this luxury. Gary assembles these sets from donations of rolling stock, track and power supplies.

**Successful Ideas:**

Our Division has learned the value to seek and “lock in” a consistent meeting location. We had lost our long time meeting location, so the idea was implemented to move our meetings around to the far borders of our division. We experienced a decline of attendance, apparently because members did not want to drive that far to a meeting. Thanks to our Assistant Superintendent, Mark Nieting, our new meeting location has a complete audio-visual system that now allows us to conduct Zoom workshops from other divisions, present training videos and YouTube model railroad subjects.

Our Division implemented a member social hour before each meeting. We provide coffee and donuts and the idea to encourage fellowship, introduction to new members and guests, sharing modeling ideas and special interests. We have also promoted a member “show-n-tell” or “bring-n-brag” table to display items of interest to the membership of something that you learned to do, built or new product that you want to share. This has been very successful and has increased the social interaction of members.

Every meeting must have an educational theme with a presentation. We have avoided the mundane, lifeless business meeting that doesn’t particularly have any interest to draw the member to attend. Interesting and relevant prototypical and modeling railroad videos have been the most favorably received activities by the membership. We have experienced an increase in member attendance.

The Division continues to have a modeling contest for each meeting. The contest descriptions are posted in the Callboard and on the web site in advance for the year. Judging is conducted by the membership and certificates for 1st, 2nd, and 3<sup>rd</sup> are awarded at the end of the meeting. In addition to the contest, we sponsor a door prize raffle at each meeting.

**MER Support:**

All of the MER Superintendents have dealt with the membership roster issues in the previous year. And, it now appears that our Business Manager has accomplished a stellar job in settling all the technical issues and has finally been able to publish a comprehensive roster that we can utilize to track our membership. We have been able to identify typo’s and contacted several members to correct their emails. Members now have the capability of changing and updating their information on the NMRA website. At the September division meeting the membership decided to volunteer to sponsor the 2026 MER Convention. Initial planning and concept meeting will commence in early 2024 to develop the location, theme and a preliminary itinerary.

[Tidewater Division Bylaws were included in this report: available on request-Ed]

Submitted:

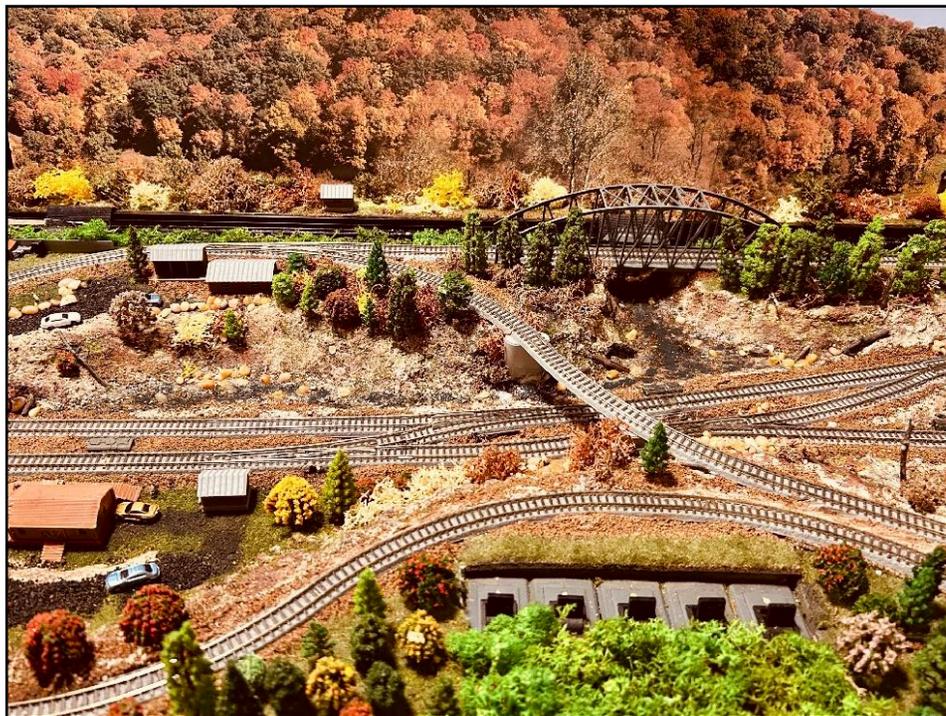
John Robey

Tidewater Division Superintendent

[Jrobey2019@gmail.com](mailto:Jrobey2019@gmail.com)

Cell: 571-217-0599

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*Z scale layout in a 16" x 33" guitar case with photo-printed backdrop, two bridges, kidney-shaped oval track on top level connected to a small switching layout in the valley. Buildings from Outland Models. Switches for turnouts embedded in foreground scenery. Track by Rokuhan. [Article on p. 75.](#)*

**DIVISION 5: JAMES RIVER - By Phil Taylor**

Section 7  
Division Superintendent's Handbook

Yearly Division Report  
Reporting Period:

Division: **James River**

Meeting Times and Places:

**ODD MONTHS in PERSON-Location Varies  
EVEN MONTHS - ZOOM**

Change in Officers from last year (including AP Coordinator).  
Contact information:

**NONE**

Achievement Program highlights:

**Several Certificates awarded  
growing interest**

Activities from the past year:

**Regular meetings**

Special Projects or working with other organizations

**Planning T-Talk group and reach  
out to local clubs in 2024**

Any successful or new ideas that your division has tried that might be helpful to other divisions.

**T-Talk generating interest**

Where in your opinion could the MER provide support to your division?

Superintendent's Name and Signature.

**Phil Taylor**  
7 - 26

## **DIVISION 11: SUSQUEHANNA - By Alan Mende**

### **Yearly Division Report Reporting Period: Jan. 1, 2023-Dec. 31, 2023**

**Division:** Susquehanna, Mid-Eastern Region

#### **Meeting Times and Places:**

February 19 – Allentown meeting

April 8 – Blue Ridge Summit – Mainline Hobby Supply Open House Tour

May 16 – Present Paul Tice with plaque for 30 years of service to the Division

May 20 – Walkerville Southern Railroad

June 10 – Columbia, PA Railroad Day event

August 27 – Division Board of Directors meeting

October 19 – 22 – Altoona, PA MER Convention hosted by the Susquehanna Division

November 19 – Division Board of Directors meeting

December 9 – Division meeting in Mechanicsburg, PA

#### **Change in Officers from last year (including AP Coordinator):**

Alan Mende, Superintendent

Richard Wurst, Assistant Superintendent

Dean Johnson, Chief Clerk

#### **Contact information:**

Superintendent: [alanmende@yahoo.com](mailto:alanmende@yahoo.com) or [super@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:super@susquehannanmra.org) (Alan Mende)

Assistant superintendent: [assist-super@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:assist-super@susquehannanmra.org) (Rich Wurst)

Chief clerk: [tresaurer@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:tresaurer@susquehannanmra.org) (Dean Johnson) with duties as secretary and treasurer

Directors: [dellis@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:dellis@susquehannanmra.org) (Dave Ellis)

[krath@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:krath@susquehannanmra.org) (Ken Roth)

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Achievement program chair: [achievement@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:achievement@susquehannanmra.org) (Bob Charles)

Membership chairman: [membership@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:membership@susquehannanmra.org)(Howard Oakes)

Sidetracks editor: [editor@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:editor@susquehannanmra.org) (Rich Wurst)

Webmaster: [webmaster@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:webmaster@susquehannanmra.org) (David Collison)

Assistant webmaster: [dellis@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:dellis@susquehannanmra.org) (Dave Ellis)

Susquehanna Division website: [www.susquehannanmra.org](http://www.susquehannanmra.org)

### **Achievement Program highlights:**

Association Volunteer award

**Activities from the past year:** See Meeting Time and Places

### **Special Projects or working with other organizations:**

Preparing for 2023 regional convention, Round the Curve to Altoona 2023, to be held Oct. 19-22, 2023

**Any successful or new ideas that your division has tried that might be helpful to other divisions:**

We instituted a free raffle at our December division meet; members brought in unwanted or unneeded model railroading items for which a drawing was held.

We unofficially divided the divisions into subdivisions:

- South Central centered on Harrisburg/Lancaster
- North Central centered on State College/Williamsport
- Southeast centered on Allentown
- Northeast centered on Wilkes-Barre/Scranton

In order to hold a meet in each of these areas.

Keith Frantz developed unique software for the company store. It is a sales tracking database and was created for use at the Company Store at the MER Convention in Altoona. It functions as an item tracker and cash register as it lists a seller's sold and unsold items, sales and amount due seller. It also calculates total Company Store sales and commissions.

We updated our Division website (<https://susquehannanmra.org/>)

**Superintendent's Name and Signature:**

Alan Mende

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Mende". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

**DIVISION 12: CAROLINA SOUTHERN - By Andrew Stitt**

**2023 Annual Report of the Carolina Southern Division, MER, NMRA**

Prepared by Andrew Stitt, Superintendent with input from input from  
David Thrams, Paymaster and Neal Anderson, AP Chairman

**Officers and Directors**

Superintendent

Andrew Stitt

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Assistant Superintendent

Curtis Alan Hardee

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Clerk

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Director 2024

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Director 2025

Edward Smith

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Director 2026

Joe Skorch

542 Eastway Drive, Kannapolis, NC 28083-9023

[Director2@carolinasouthern.org](mailto:Director2@carolinasouthern.org) 480-558-6235

**Division Website:** <http://carolinasouthern.org>

## **Membership:**

Membership for the 2023 calendar year remained even at 135 members. Members represented the Carolina Southern Division at the two model train shows held within the Division's boundaries. Additionally, copies of the NMRA brochure were placed at model train shops throughout the Division promoting membership in the NMRA.

## **Financial Status:**

The Division bank balance increased slightly in 2023. The year end balance is \$9,628.05.

## **Division Events for 2023:**

The Division traditionally holds meetings or other activities for its members 11 months of the year, excluding December. The Annual Meeting is held each January. In 2023, the Annual Meeting was held at the Newton Depot in Newton, NC to commemorate the successful completion of the 2022 MER Convention held in Charlotte, and to celebrate the first complete year of display of the Train Town exhibit at the Depot. Meetings were held at the Mooresville Public Library in February and March with clinics. April featured the return of Railroad Model University (see more below), and May's meeting was held in conjunction with a model train show at the North Carolina Transportation Museum. June saw members take another road trip to the Dreams Come True live steam layout in South Carolina. Regular meetings with clinics were held in July and August. The Division picnic was held a week early so members could attend the SER Convention. Similarly, the October meeting was held a week early so that members could attend the MER Convention. The year concluded with a meeting with a clinic in November.

### **Educational Activities:**

Members of the Division were excited to resume their Railroad Model University after two years of pandemic restrictions. With the help of many, a location was secured, and the Dean of the university was able to secure a suitable date in April. Over 30 clinics were conducted during the single day event. Attendees included NMRA members from the Carolina Piedmont Division, the Carolina Southern Division, and the Palmetto Division of the SER. In addition, a modular layout was on display. Feedback given by attendees was very positive, and the division is already in the planning stage for the 2024 event.

### **Achievement Program Activity:**

2023 Awards:

Dave & Michelle Chance received their APs for Author

Ed Smith received his AP for Cars

Ed Smith received his **Master Model Railroader**

Keith Iritsky received his AP for Structures

Joe Skorch received his AP for Dispatching

Brad Jones received his Golden Spike award

There are now 5 MMR's within CSD, and 20 Golden Spikes

### **NMRA and MER Convention Activity:**

Members of the Division attended the National NMRA Convention as well as the SER Convention held in Georgia, and the MER Convention held in Pennsylvania. Some discussion has been had about conducting joint meetings with both the Palmetto and Carolina Mountain Divisions of the SER in 2024.

## Future Directions for 2024:

At the end of 2023, the Carolina Southern Division, with the encouragement of the NMRA and MER expanded to include 3 counties in South Carolina (already within the Division), 25 counties in North Carolina, and 15 counties in Virginia. In this additional geography, an effort has been made to reach out to those NMRA/MER members who reside within the new Division boundary. We hope that these affected members will come to feel welcome to CSD, and are able to participate in its activities, either remotely or directly. We also hope to learn more about the model railroad clubs and other activities that they enjoy.

Additionally, the Division was approached by several members who volunteer to the Newton Depot about supporting a model railroad educational program. They had started one before the beginning of the pandemic, but it was suspended. With the support of officials with the Newton Depot authority, this program is scheduled to begin in late January.

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[Building-Your-Model-Railroad.com](http://Building-Your-Model-Railroad.com)

*A Complete Guide to  
Creating Your Own Empire*



## **DIVISION 13: CAROLINA PIEDMONT - By Charles Rausch, MMR (Photos by the author or as noted)**

### **Last Year-**

2023 was an eventful year for the Carolina Piedmont Division.

### **Expansion-**

The most notable event for this year was the expansion of our boundaries. In months of late 2022 and early 2023, some CPD members have met NMRA, Mid-eastern region (MER) members who reside outside the boundaries of any MER NC Division. Some of these MER members have expressed an interest in becoming members of the Carolina Piedmont Division, namely Bob Bridges, Charles Caruso, and Mark Snowden. Early in 2023, the CPD-13 Board of Directors appointed a committee to investigate the probability of having every member of the MER be assigned to an MER division. This permits those members access to member meetings, in-person or by Zoom, access to divisional events, open houses, op sessions, tours, and clinics. It also provides divisional level Achievement Program access for local evaluations.

As an MER director, I brought this issue up at the April 2023 MER BOD meeting and was met with encouragement and *"full steam ahead!"*



*#1309 At Helmstetter's Curve 10/2023*

Consequently, we did go through the investigative process and brought the Carolina Southern Division along to determine the expanded boundaries. The process continued through to October, where at the regional MER convention, held in Altoona, the MER BOD approved the expanded boundaries, much to the delight of the NMRA National President, Gordy Robinson, who attended the convention and all MER meetings. Please see the excellent article by Jack Dziadul “A Division for every Member” in *The Herald* for November 2023. It will give you the details of the process undertaken and the new counties in both the Carolina Piedmont and Carolina Southern divisions.

## Convention 2024

Back in early 2022, Carolina Piedmont Division volunteered to host the 2024 MER convention in Durham, NC. The local convention committee (LCC) is co-chaired by Kevin O’Connor and Jack Dziadul. Convention planning has been in progress all throughout 2023 and the event details are taking shape nicely. Each month at our member meetings, details on the convention plan are shared with the members most often by either Jack or Kevin.

## Clinics

Hands on- Arduino clinic. We held two “hands-on” clinics on Arduino micro-processors. The first in April with Bob Gamble on the Arduino basics. The goal was to have each participant get a linked up Arduino working with a flashing LED. This was a unique clinic because we created an “Arduino-Team” to ensure that each participant’s computer was functional with their Arduino. We have pre-clinic meetings with the participants to iron out any issues concerning loading the Arduino software on their computers and linking it to the actual Arduino. This was done so that there was no lost time at the start of the clinic with folks getting their devices linked up. The second Arduino clinic with Mike Rossi explored more in-depth programming aspects of the Arduino.

We had a number of first-timer clinicians, Bob Gamble, Owen Maddux, Mike Rossi, Neil Blumenkopf and Tom Shafer. I look forward to more first-timers. Doing a local clinic does count towards the Achievement Program – Author points.

## Tour of the Aberdeen, Carolina, and Western Shops



Through the efforts of Jack Dziadul, he was able to arrange a shop tour of the AC&W in Candor, NC. The shop tour took place on Friday September 15, 2023, for 30 CPD members and guests. It was an excellent experience for all attendees.

### Club Car



The HO Club Car was received late in 2022 from Accurail. It was an original Norfolk Southern 4-bay steel hopper. All of these cars were sold off throughout 2023. The N-scale version from Bluford Shops has been late in coming and expect delivery in early January 2024.

## Member Meeting Locations

We now have two member meeting locations available for CPD member meetings. One is a bit more convenient on the border of Apex and Holly Springs on old Highway 55. The other, The Preserve at Jordan Lake, is a bit more accommodating for Audio-Visual and hands-on clinics. We are continuing to evaluate other locations as they come up.

## Train Sets for Kids program

The raffle layout produced for the Neuse River Valley Train Show in November provides funds for CPD to purchase new HO train sets and donate these sets to charitable institutions for needy kids. This year we donated six train sets to various institutions.

## 2024

CPD-13 is planning Increased presence at train shows in New Bern, Greensboro, and Spencer along with the two NRV shows in May and November. We will be using this to provide a mini meet and greets for members in the outlying counties that have been absorbed.

Plan for member open houses in advance of the Convention as “dress-rehearsals” for the real thing.

Open house trip to the Golden East Model Railroader’s Club in Rocky Mount as a “mini meet” for our eastern county members with a guest operating session.

CPD member meetings will continue have news about achievement program and we will continue to prod those members into getting models ready for the convention.

Recruit members interested in operations for member’s layouts that are ready to start regular sessions.

- Jim Kalenowski- N Scale Lehigh Valley/CNJ, Easton to Catasauqua using JMRI Ops.
- Rick Hollings- HO Aberdeen & Rockfish using JMRI Ops or Car Cards.
- Erik Dyke, - HO Pacific Northwest mainline railroad using JMRI Ops.
- Bob Gamble, HO Southern Railway using JMRI.

We will ask for requests for clinic topics that are of interest to certain members. We already have such a request on a clinic on planning your layout for operations.

The convention website is already up on the internet and available to all to keep up with all that is happening there.

With the upcoming MER convention planned for the September 26-29, this year will be eventful too.

**DIVISION 14: CHESAPEAKE - By Kirk Bateman**

Prepared: February 3, 2024 by Kirk Bateman, Superintendent with input from Tim Beaty, Clerk; David Arday, Paymaster; and Kurt Thompson, Division AP Chair.

**Officers and Directors**

Kirk Bateman

Superintendent

Webmaster

Mike Shylanski

Assistant Superintendent

K Travers Stavac

Director-at-Large

David Arday

Paymaster

Tim Beaty

Clerk

Kurt Thompson

AP Chairman

Newsletter Editor

Tom Casey

Past Superintendent

## Division Website

<https://www.chesdiv-nmra.org>

### Membership

The December 2023 roster received from the MER shows 105 members. The December 2022 roster provided by the MER indicates 108 members on the roster.

## Financial

The 2023 Paymaster's Report (covering the period November 1, 2022 to October 31, 2023) shows our total balance (the sum of the balances in our savings and petty cash accounts) to be \$1,869.49. This is a net decrease of \$456.03 from 2022.

## Division Events

**January 27:** The Division met by Zoom to renew acquaintances and to watch a couple of model railroading-related videos. We viewed a video by Joe Fugate about his Siskiyou Line and a YouTube video from Ron's Trains 'n Things titled *Operations: Model Railroad Yard Operations - What They Do And Why They Do It*. Approximately a dozen members participated.

**February 24:** The Division met by Zoom for a Meet-n-Greet/Show-n-Tell. Approximately 10 members participated.

**March 25:** The Division held a Modeler's Day-In, to which Division members were invited to bring a current project or two (projects that were easily transportable) and any tools they may have needed to work on their project(s). Despite the low turnout, the five members who braved the heavy rain and wind that day enjoyed themselves.

**April 29/30:** The Division manned a table at the Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium. Several members from both the Potomac and Chesapeake Divisions volunteered to assist. We brought the Division switching layout, talked to passersby about model railroading and the NMRA, and handed out NMRA promotional materials.

**June 10:** The Division conducted a joint Mini-Con with the Potomac Division. We met at the South Columbia Baptist Church in Columbia, MD from 8:45 AM – 12:30 PM. Members from both Divisions presented five clinics. We also held a popular vote contest. Thirty-five members attended.

The agenda for the joint mini-con follows:

8:45 AM Opening for Social

9:15 AM Greeting and Announcements

9:30 AM Clinics:

- Clinic 1 Motive Power: Alex Belida, MMR, Potomac
- Clinic 2 Weathering with Oils: Jeff Burch, Chesapeake

10:20 AM Clinics:

- Clinic 3 Backdrops: Brian Sheron, MMR, Potomac
- Clinic 4 Weathering with Vallejo Acrylics: Mike Shylanski, Chesapeake

11:10 AM Clinic:

- Clinic 5 Trash to Treasures: Martin Brechbiel, MMR, Potomac

11:50 AM Final Assembly, Popular Vote Results, Close Out

**July 15:** The Division hosted an in-person hands-on clinic, “Using TinkerCad,” conducted by Kurt Thompson, MMR. The meeting was held at the computer lab of the Anne Arundel County Library, Odenton Branch. Thirteen members attended.

**November 18:** The Division held its Annual General Meeting at the B&O Railroad Historical Society in Eldersburg. We announced the winners of our election of officers, Clerk and Paymaster, that had been conducted electronically prior to the meeting. We discussed the recent reorganization of the MER to eliminate “orphan” members (those NMRA members not assigned to a Division). Mike Shylanski presented a clinic about AirSlide Covered Hoppers.

**Charitable and Educational Activities:** None

**Achievement Program Activity:**

**Kirk Bateman** - Association Volunteer      4/21/2023

**NMRA and MER Convention Activity:** None

**Future Directions:** We are exploring conducting a joint mini-convention with the Potomac Division early in the summer.

**From the Divisions...**

## Branch Lines

As *The Local* Editor, I have the distinct pleasure of receiving a copy of all the Division newsletters, which are all very informative and creative to say the least. Here are links to those publications and to their Division Websites for easy access:

Divisions	Newsletters
<a href="#">1 - New Jersey Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>Train Orders</i></a>
<a href="#">2 - Potomac Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>The Potomac Flyer</i></a>
<a href="#">3 - Philadelphia Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>The Dispatcher</i></a>
<a href="#">4 - Tidewater Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>The Callboard</i></a>
<a href="#">5 - James River Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>Crossties - Index</i></a>
<a href="#">10 - South Mountain Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>Wheel Report</i></a>
<a href="#">11 - Susquehanna Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>Sidetracks</i></a>
<a href="#">12 - Carolina Southern Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>The Brass Pounder</i></a>
<a href="#">13 - Carolina Piedmont Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>The Herald</i></a>
<a href="#">14 - Chesapeake Division</a>	<a href="#"><i>The Relay</i></a>

**Reminder:** Here’s how to access the [\*\*Digital NMRA Magazine\*\*](#):

1. Go to <https://www.nmra.org/user/register>
2. Answer a few questions.
3. Click on Create a New Account.
4. You will receive an email on how to set your password.
5. If you need help, watch the [YouTube Video](#).

**Other NMRA Links:**

[Bulletin](#)

[NMRA Partners \(Discounts\)](#)

[Archives](#)

[Education](#)

[Turntable](#)

[Submit Articles](#)

[Videos](#)

[Clinics](#)

## In Memoriam

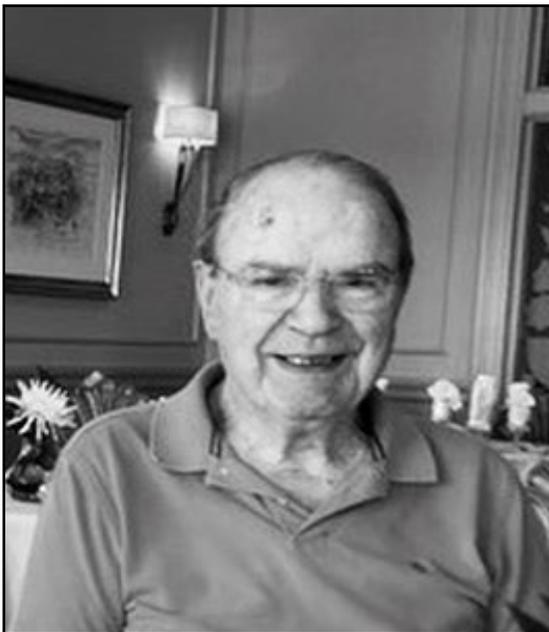
### Bill Birchall

## Founding Father of the New Jersey Division

By Jack Gallagher

It's with sad news that we announce the passing of our fellow New Jersey Division member Bill Birchall.

Bill was one of the founding members of the NJD back in 1968.



## William Birchall Obituary

Obituary published on Legacy.com by Mount Laurel Home for Funerals & Cremation Services, Inc. on May 1, 2024.

William E. Birchall, Jr., 84, of [Hainesport, NJ](#), died peacefully on April 30, 2024.

Bill is survived by his loving wife of 63 years Esther (née Stevens), his son Dan (Vivian Kobusingye); his daughter Susan Hirt (Kevin); granddaughters Tera, Zoe, and Amy Birchall, and grandson Mitchell Hirt. Also survived by his

loving sister Marilyn B. Peterson (Lind Aitken), sisters-in-law Edith Barr, Mary Bass, Linda Gaylord, Betsy Ayers, and Lois Berger; and numerous nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and great-nephews. Bill was predeceased by his brother Bob Birchall.

Bill was tax assessor of Hainesport and Lumberton, and later of Manchester and finally of Woodbridge, until he retired in 2004.

To plant trees in memory, please visit the [Sympathy Store](#).



## In Memoriam

### Jack Parker, MMR No. 504

By Greg Warth

The model railroaders in the Mid-Eastern Region wish to acknowledge and direct your attention to an article written by Roy Becker for the June issue of *The Brass Pounder* in tribute to the late Jack Parker, MMR No. 504. Jack was known to many of us in the MER and even more so in the [Carolina Southern Division](#) as a great model railroader. The title of the article is “Great Times with Jack Parker” and describes the trip that Roy and Jack took though Tennessee and Kentucky on the way to the National NMRA Convention in Indianapolis in 2016. Please review that article in the “[The Brass Pounder](#).” Here is a link to Jack’s [Piedmont & Western Model Railroad Museum](#) with [pictures by Gil Brauch](#). Also here is a [YouTube video of the layout](#). Jack will be sorely missed.



*MMR Jack Parker's Piedmont & Western Model Railroad (Photo by Gil Brauch).*

## Experimenting in Z Scale

By Greg Warth (Photos by the author)

Sometimes, when the stars and planets line up just right, I get the notion that I'd like to try something new. I mostly model in N scale because I like having a big empire in a small space and lot of scenery. I've wondered about taking it a step smaller and building a Z scale layout in a suitcase. I have heard of people doing that and I wanted to give it a try. I didn't have an old suitcase to use, but I did have an old rectangular-shaped Fender guitar case that fit the bill perfectly.

After creating a track plan, I cut out the inside fur lining of the case, built up two levels with extruded foam sheets, cut out a creek and a valley, and covered it all with plaster cloth. Then, after using Sculptamold to build a rocky terrain, I painted the whole thing with a variety of colored washes, like earth brown, raw umber, burnt umber, slate grey, yellow ochre, and black.

I laid a kidney-bean shaped oval of Z scale [Rokuhan](#) track on the top level with one bridge over the creek and another over the valley (**Photo 1**). Using five turnouts, I also laid a small switching layout in the valley and connected it to the upper level with a wide curving incline on the right. Track feeders and turnout wires were buried in the foam and collected in the front center of the layout.

After gluing down some ballast, ground foam came next, then low level vegetation, then pine trees and fall colored deciduous trees (**Photo 2**). I assembled a few Z scale kits from [Outland Models](#) and placed them on the layout, along with a few cars, trucks, people, deer, a few rocks and fallen logs (**Photo 3**).



*Photo 1: Center view showing two bridges, switching tracks in the valley and five switches partially hidden by scenery in the foreground in front of top level track.*

Next came a photo-printed backdrop attached to the inside of the top cover of the case and then some scenery blended into the bottom of the backdrop. Strips of Velcro were used to keep the top of the case from falling backward. I then cut out a rectangular area in the front center to hold the switches for the turnouts and wires from the track feeders and covered it with scenery. I drilled two holes in the bottom front of the case to accommodate power wires (one for DC, one for AC), coming in from the external transformer.



*Photo 2: Left side of the layout showing a gradual inclining road from the valley up to the church, part of a farm in the upper left corner, a freight station next to the straight tracks in the valley.*

I had fun with this project although I must say it was challenging. I had to replace three turnouts because of diluted glue spreading under them. I started with Marklin track but switched to Rokuhan because of the greater availability of variations in radii for the curved sections. Connecting Atlas Z scale flextrack with both Rokuhan and Marklin track proved to be very difficult and was abandoned. Inexpensive locomotives purchased on eBay didn't work well, so I had to buy better ones from American Z Line.

Nevertheless, I would do it again. In fact I'm planning on doing another Z scale layout in a regular guitar case with the usual non-rectangular configuration. I'll let you know how that goes.

*Photo 3: Right side of the layout showing bridge and creek at the top left, switching area in the valley, engine facility and warehouse in the right center, and top level tracks in the foreground.*

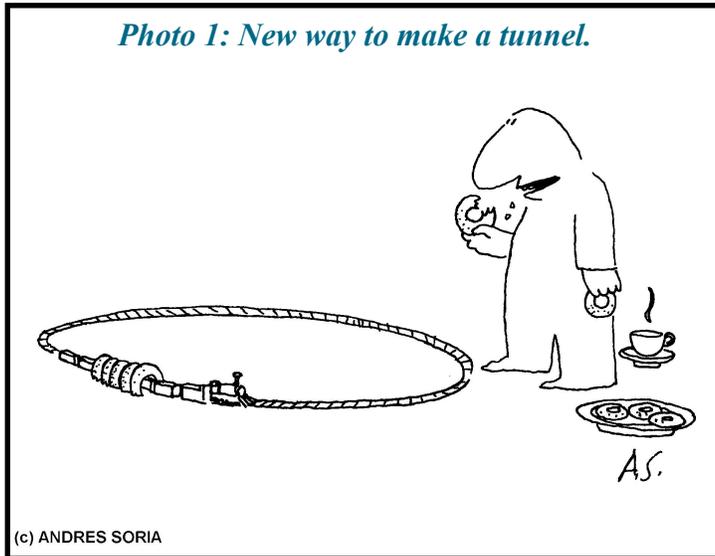


## Back on Track...

## New Tricks and Techniques

By Greg Warth (Photos by the author)

*Photo 1: New way to make a tunnel.*



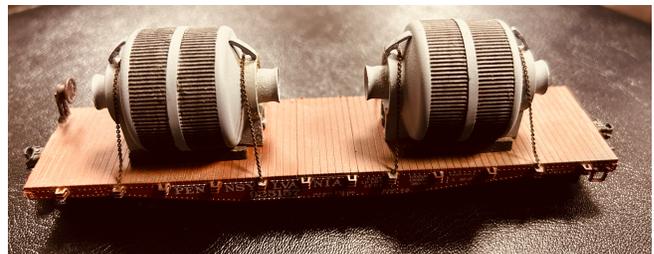
(c) ANDRES SORIA

(Purchased for noncommercial use from [cartoonstock.com](http://cartoonstock.com))

Model railroaders are well known for making new things for their layouts out of almost nothing. I really enjoyed the clinic presented by Rich Wurst during our last MER convention on this topic. This cartoon (**Photo 1**) reminded me of that. The possibilities are endless. I'm sure there are things you've done similar to this. Maybe not with donuts, but other items that would have ordinarily gone in the trash can. These are the gems of model railroading. Here are a couple of Rich's examples (**Photos 2, 3**).



*Photo 2: Clippings from a toothpaste tube.*



*Photo 3: Bottle caps glued together and painted.*

I would love to make a collection of these gems and print them here. So, here's your chance to get your name in *The Local*. What have you done to make something out of scrap? Send it in to the [Editor](#), and I'll add it to the list.

You're a real trooper if you have made it all the way to the end of this issue. We've packed a lot of stuff in here. We hope you enjoyed it. Please continue to send in your original articles. Let us know what you are working on. Whatever it is, if it's related to model railroading, I am sure it will be of interest to the rest of us. If you want to learn more about any particular topic, let us know about that as well. We'll do our best to research it and write about it.

Thanks again to our fantastic [editorial staff](#) for their assistance in putting this together. The quality of these issues is largely dependent on *their* expertise and wisdom.

[HOME](#)